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PERSONAL EXPERIENCES
OF THE GREAT WAR
(AN UNFINISHED MANUSCRIPT)

FRANK M. LAIRD,
LATE ROYAL DUTCH PETROLEUM

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PERSONAL EXPERIENCES
OF THE GREAT WAR

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(An Unfinished Manuscript)

BY

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PREFACE

Chapters twenty-five to thirty-four of the following book were written first and given as a lecture by request. The earlier chapters (one to twenty-four), were written later largely for the Author's own satisfaction, and not altogether with a view to publication.

During the interval, which occurs at the end of Chapter 24, from June, 1917, to March, 1918, he was wounded at Ypres in August, and sent home. He returned to the front in January, 1918.

The Author was at work on this part of the book when, as a result of his war service, he developed a fatal illness. He died on January 6, 1925.

In deciding to publish this volume I have been greatly helped by Miss S. K. Laird, whose assistance in correcting the manuscript was invaluable. I am also very much indebted to Mr. Hugh Anderson for his help in deciphering names, etc.

MAY G. LAIRD.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

OF THE

GREAT WAR.

CHAPTER I.

THE CALL TO ARMS.

IN July, 1914, I was peaceably camping with some friends on Howth Summit. No suspicion had crossed my mind that these were the last days of the old order of things, that the avalanche of the Great War, which was soon to sweep me to far off shores amid strange and terrible scenes, had already begun to move.

The papers were full of the crisis between Austria and Servia, but, in the closing days of July I remember reassuring some ladies next door by confidently asserting that there could be no European War.

The beginning of August saw us in camp at Derrynane, Co. Kerry, and even in this remote corner the all pervading nature of the state of war was brought

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home to us. We saw barbed wire defences, then something new and strange, being put up in Waterville, and on Valentia Island, to protect the telegraphic communications.

Back in Howth by the middle of the month, we found Dublin Bay filled with a great fleet of steamers come to take away the troops in Ireland. For some weeks the heartstirring sight of battalions of infantry on the march to embark for France was common. The East Surreys passed jovially by me one day, browned by the air of their summer training, on the way to take their share in the magnificent self-devotion by which England's little army held the pass, while her untrained millions were being licked into shape, and won a never-dying name at Mons, the Marne, and Ypres. To my surprise the common folk who had regarded the English soldiers with scant affection of late gave them a hearty cheer as they went by. The only British regiment which got a bad send-off was the King's Own Scottish Borderers. Their action some weeks before in firing on the Dublin mob was deeply resented. As they left for the front an American visitor was intensely surprised to see a surging mob outside the station hooting and spitting at them. "Is this the way," he not unnaturally asked, "in which you bid your army God-speed on its way to the war?"

By now I began to experience searchings of heart. It was plain that this was going to be a big affair. Of course in Ireland it was looked at as mainly England's concern, and there was no mass movement to the recruiting office such as did so much honour to

the manhood of England. Even here, however, the placards calling for recruits for Kitchener's Army were on all the hoardings. Good friends of mine who were Black Watch Territorials had been mobilised early in August and were now guarding the Forth Bridge. Every day word came that someone had joined up. For my own part I was just thirty-five years old, and I had varicose veins, and I had never considered soldiering as at all in my line. Besides, I had a house of my own to keep going, with a sister to keep it for me. So for a while I contented myself with the fact that Kitchener had set the limit at thirty-five years and sat tight. It soon went up to thirty-eight and then I saw that I was up against it. I meditated deeply for some time longer. On the one hand were all the prepossessions of my life, for I was naturally a man of peace. On the other was the awkward question of how my friends would regard me afterwards if they found me still at home when the war was over. It seemed a poor affair to be peaceably pen-pushing while men were fighting and dying out yonder. There was the reflection too, that a Civil Servant's life, though agreeable, did not offer great variety. Here was a chance to get out of the groove with a vengeance.

While these cogitations were gradually pushing me to the Recruiting Sergeant I heard that a friend of mine many years older than myself was off as a despatch rider. That put the finishing touch to it. I broached the question in some trepidation to my sister one evening, saying that I thought I ought to join up. I was prepared for protests and perhaps

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tears. To my surprise and relief she promptly replied that she thought I should. That settled the matter.

I interviewed the Chief Clerk of my department on the subject, who, after warning me to look at the matter on every side, concurred very heartily with my decision. My next visit was to the recruiting office of the Dublin Fusiliers in Grafton Street, where the doctor, after vetting me thoroughly and learning that I had covered over 50 miles in two days on a walking tour at Easter, expressed his opinion that I was a very healthy young man, and he was ready to pass me there and then, varicose veins and all. I decided not to be too precipitate, however, and said I would return when I had the offending veins removed.

Early in the autumn the excellent Officers' Training Corps of Dublin University formed a Graduates' Corps for past members of the University. I became a member, and in the early mornings and the afternoons and on Saturday half-holidays we were initiated into the mysteries of forming fours and other rudiments of the Infantryman's calling. Among our instructors were Kee, who was the foremost member of the Pals' Company of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, and after much hard service died a soldier's death of wounds received in the German attack in March, 1918, and Kinghan, who survived, though several times wounded, to become a Major and win the M.C. Having passed from the ranks of the mugs I procured a secondhand O.T.C. uniform for ten shillings, and was qualified to march abroad

with the Corps, and to do training in the country. It was a somewhat weird body containing, besides many men of fighting age, other old gentlemen whose spirit was magnificent but whose flesh was scarcely equal to it. One in particular, small and stooped, with grayish hair, beard, and whiskers, excited at times the mirth of the ungodly when out on route marches. An irreverent guttersnipe watching us march up Portobello Bridge exclaimed when he saw him: "Lord, look at my grandfather!"

The headquarters of the O.T.C. in Trinity College was an inspiring sight in those days, surrounded by a crowd of young undergraduates anxious to get their commissions and be off before the war was over. The same place early in September was the scene of a farewell parade of the Rugby Football Corps on their departure to the Curragh to form D. Company (the Pals' Company) of the 7th Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Here I had my first glimpse of my future comrades in arms, the cream of young Dublin, with Sergeant-Major Guest at their head. There were men from all sorts of callings and of all ages, everyone as keen as mustard. High hopes were entertained of them, and when they came to the test they did not disgrace the traditions of the Regiment to which they belonged. No soldier need ask for higher praise. It will always be one of the proudest recollections of my life that I had the honour to be made one of their Company.

Towards the end of November I bade farewell to my office, and betook myself to the Richmond Hospital where I spent a fortnight under the doctor's care.

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Another fortnight, passed in recuperating, and in the pleasures of being engaged to be married, brought me to the 30th December, when I bound myself over for three years or duration, took the King's shilling (or two and ninepence, to be meticulously correct), swore to do my damndest to maintain George V. and his successors on the throne, and agreed to report to the 7th Dublins at the Curragh on 31st December, 1914.

CHAPTER II.

THE CURRAGH.

ON that day I trained it to Newbridge, and drove through a desolate, cold, snow-covered country to the Curragh, where I soon found the Gough Barracks, and reported myself. I was introduced to Colonel Downing, who enquired if I wished to kill Germans, a question which I answered in the affirmative, though not exactly thirsting for blood, and was duly drafted to D. Company and installed in a barrack room for the night.

To the civilian accustomed to the refinements of ordinary households and all their apparatus of comfort, a barrack room at first sight wears but an uninviting look. Simplicity can scarce be pushed much further. The beds ranged down each wall, long table in the middle, and forms down each side of it are its only furnishing. It is not till the raw recruit gets shaken down into his new way of life that he begins to find a certain charm in the simplicity itself, and to return from his route march or other training to the goodfellowship of the barrack room at night with a feeling of homeliness.

The room in which I found myself installed held the 4th Section of No. 13 Platoon of D. Company.

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In a couple of days I was transferred permanently to the 2nd Section. When bedtime came I was initiated into the mysteries of a plank and biscuit bed. The apparatus consisted of two trestles, three planks, three square cushions known as biscuits, and three blankets. The planks were laid on the low trestles. The biscuits placed on these covered them exactly, and the three blankets were arranged according to each man's fancy as to how the maximum of comfort might be attained. In the morning the biscuits and blankets and all were folded up and arranged with military neatness along the walls. In spite of its unpromising appearance this affair was most comfortable to sleep on, though I never went the length of some epicures who left out the middle plank in order to lie more softly. We sometimes looked on the Gough Barracks as a rough and undesirable abode at the time, but in later days they were more than once the object of tender recollections as we realised that there were worse forms of accommodation to be met with in a soldier's life.

The Curragh was my home during January, 1915. The first three weeks I passed on the Recruits' parade ground, learning over again the elements of infantry drill, which I flattered myself I knew already through my experience as a member of the Graduates' Corps. Beside the cold and frosty hours, however, during which we marked time, formed fours, and marched up and down the parade ground under the beneficent eye of "Father M—," Colour-Sergeant in charge of the recruits, there were warmer, slacker, and more comfortable spells inter-

spersed, in which we learnt musketry under the amiable Sergeant Hassett in one of the halls or barrack rooms, and began to understand the ins and outs of the Lee Enfield.

In these early days was born a wholehearted respect and liking for the British Non-Commissioned Officer, which but grew the stronger with better acquaintance. "Father —" was a fatherly and imposing, almost a clerical figure. It was only when he appeared one morning with an indubitable black eye, rumoured to be the fruit of a fracas overnight arising from excess in spirituous liquors, that I realised with a shock that he had his human weaknesses after all. The two little sergeants who were our mentors in musketry were also both soldiers and gentlemen.

The recruits were a mixed lot. Pollock had come from tea-planting in Malaya. He fell in a hopeless charge in Gallipoli. Dudley had thrown up a good job in the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank in China, and was to finish his course in France. Elkin was a dentist from Australia. There was an elderly Irishman too, long past military age, who had come from South America. We included in our troop some genuine Dublin gutties. Two of them showed by their expert knowledge of army ways that they had been there before. They were, as a matter of fact, deserters enlisted again under false names and it was not long before they failed to answer the roll call one morning, and we saw them no more.

One unfortunate young fellow from Drogheda spent a short period with us. His hopeless attempts

to walk in step with the other recruits at length drew from the long-suffering sergeant the exclamation, "O God and Father while I stray," and led him to withdraw him from the squad and place him as a sort of auxiliary behind. In this position he followed the ranks with a kind of hop, skip and jump for some days. His idiosyncrasies made him the subject of numerous practical jokes, such as sending him equipped with rifle and bayonet to the Quartermaster to be measured for a sentry box. At length the unfortunate fellow went over the borderline, which he had not been far from when he came, and hailed Lieutenant Sir Stanley Cochrane as his father one day on meeting him in the parade ground. This terminated his military career.

One of our earliest experiences of regular training was a lengthy route march in the forenoon, a late dinner, and a call to "night operations" soon after four, when we had to march out some miles again and dig trenches in the snow-covered ground. A few of us quietly retired under some bushes while this was going on and slept the sleep of the just on the snow. We returned to barracks late, exercising the soldier's prerogative of grumbling to a considerable extent. This was counted a rather hard day. In the ordinary course we finished the day's parades at 4 p.m., had our tea, and were free till 10 p.m., unless put on guard or some other duty.

The Curragh did not offer a very varied bill of entertainment, but there was a picture house, and there were various Soldiers' Homes, which netted a good deal of money from our lot. The respective

merits of the feeds to be got in the Roman Catholic, Wesleyan, Presbyterian and Church of Ireland Homes were much canvassed, and on the whole, the Roman Catholic and Wesleyan were accounted the best. In these various hostels I was initiated into the pleasures of "sausages and mash" and other delicacies which formed the popular supper to bridge the interval between tea supplied by the army at 4 p.m. and breakfast the next morning.

The crowds of young soldiers which filled the Curragh in those evenings were an impressive sight, and the general gaiety of those who were in a few months to be plunged into the hell of war sometimes caused me to wonder.

Sundays were free except for Church parade in the morning, when Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland fell in in front, and "fancy religions" behind to be marched to their respective temples.

The routine was interrupted from time to time for each private by his turn coming round to be Orderly man for the day. Then he had to rise in the morning and parade with the Orderlies from the other barrack rooms, to "draw" the buckets of tea and rashers and tomatoes or other viands provided for breakfast. After breakfast he did not go on parade, but washed up and brushed out the barrack room and made everything shipshape. He paraded at the cookhouse again at dinner and tea time, in like manner. This was accounted an easy job and freer than sloping arms in the ranks.

Towards the end of January various rumours circulated as to a move. Some said we were going

to Dublin. Positive word came that we were going straight to France. Finally, at the close of the month the 7th Dublins moved to the Royal Barracks, Dublin. The move, we were informed, was in the nature of a compliment, as we were chosen as the best disciplined battalion of the Brigade to withstand the temptations of a city station. The last days were spent in cleaning up the Gough Barracks and in inspections of all kinds. We were now all equipped with khaki, which had been rather hard to get at first. The enthusiasm of the budding soldier for the shining parts of his equipment had been turned at times to account by provident quartermaster-sergeants, who sold the army issue of cap badges and numerals to the greenhorns, which they should have provided free.

However, the enthusiastic Kitchener's army man recked little of a shilling or so if he could have a complete outfit of badges for his shoulders and the cap, which it still required a mental effort to refrain from lifting to his lady acquaintances.

Having made everything spick and span in barracks we set out at the end of the month, our destination for the first night being Naas. As we had not yet been served out with our "harness," we marched with overcoats rolled bandolier fashion and our D.P. ("drill purposes") rifles. The ten miles to Naas were easily accomplished and there we spent a somewhat comfortless night in the Dépôt of our Regiment, which was to be well known to some of us later. Next day we accomplished the twenty miles to Dublin and thought ourselves rather fine

fellows. A few months later we would have regarded a march in such light order as a veritable cakewalk. Our opinion of our prowess was enhanced by observing the stragglers of the battalion with whom we were exchanging stations. We passed them about half way and their "tail" seemed to stretch most of the way back to Dublin. We reached the Royal Barracks in the evening and were all confined to barracks, to our disgust, that night. Still, though some were footsore and most were tired we were all overjoyed at the prospect of even a short stay in our native city. Personally, I arrived with the skin rubbed off a heel. I had not yet learned the size I required in marching boots. However, I doctored it up and decided not to "go sick," as I had pressing reasons for getting out of barracks at the earliest opportunity.

CHAPTER III.

THE ROYAL BARRACKS, DUBLIN.

OUR first job on arriving in Dublin was the same as our last at the Curragh—cleaning barracks—and the second was worse than the first. Our predecessors' standard was not high, and for a day or two the whole battalion was on fatigue scraping the barrack room floors and cleaning up generally. Our Colonel was highly wroth and declared that had he known the conditions of the place he would have refused to take over. When the job was done he lectured the battalion on parade in soldierly fashion on the virtues of cleanliness, assured us that a dirty battalion was an ill-disciplined one, and an ill-disciplined one was a dirty one. He also informed us that we had been chosen for the Dublin station on account of the good record of the battalion at the Curragh, that he hoped that we would not now be led astray by the allurements of the city, and that his intention was to trust us and not to send out any pickets. What pleased us still more was the issue of passes till 12 midnight to all hands.

The majority of the battalion had friends in Dublin, and they were thus enabled to spend the hours from 4 p.m., when the day's work usually

finished, unless "night operations" were included, till midnight as they liked, to their great satisfaction. The fact that they had to rise about 6 did not induce many to curtail their hours of liberty.

Our change of address caused no slackening in the intensive training which sought to turn out a battalion in a few months with strong enough discipline to stand the wear and tear of active service. Flanagan's Quarry, about five miles from the barracks, was acquired for the purpose of trench digging, and thither we wended our way almost daily to labour on an elaborate system (as it seemed to us) of trenches and dugouts there laid out. Picks and shovels were distributed from two heaps each morning, and caused much experiment among some in the doctrine of chances. Their minds were exercised as to whether they would have a better chance of getting a shovel which was easier to carry by taking their place in the front or rear rank when falling in.

There was some of the usual grouching at the monotony and hardness of the job, but the grouchers would gladly have exchanged some of the days they had later in Basingstoke for a turn in the rural peace of Flanagan's Quarry. They had not yet realised that the Army, though it appears to be doing its damndest in working you, always has one better up its sleeve.

The quarry was diversified by field training in the country round Dublin, by route marches, rifle practice on a range at Straffan, and night operations. The most ambitious of the last was an occasion on which the battalion left barracks at 11 p.m., marched

twelve or fifteen miles into the Dublin mountains, spent the night in the snow there, and engaged in a sham battle next morning before marching back. The rifle range was looked on as something of a holiday, as we went down by train and had nothing to do between our turns of firing except keep ourselves warm. A turn as marker in the butts there raised solemn thoughts, as the formidable crack of rifles fired in his direction resounded in his ears, of what it would feel like to face them without the cover of a good sandbank.

Not long after our arrival in Dublin we were served out with our first leather equipment, and were initiated into the mystery of rolling the army overcoat into such shape and compass as would fit it into the pack and leave room for divers other articles. This equipment, being made by some fraudulent contractor in America, did not last more than three weeks, by which time it had pretty well fallen to pieces. The next issue was British stuff, and lasted us till we got to the Peninsula.

The misfortune of being detailed from time to time for guard or other duty encroached somewhat on the freedom of the Tommy after 4 p.m. There were two ways of getting out of guard duty, viz., to pay some old soldier who was very glad to act as substitute for a few shillings, or to "get the stick." One man in excess of the number required was always detailed for guard, and, when the guard turned out for inspection before going on duty, the shiniest and best looking member from a military point of view, was told to fall out. He had "got the

stick," and was released from duty on the occasion. When I was detailed for guard on Good Friday, a holiday on which I had arranged to picnic with my friends, I first cursed and then set to work polishing my harness. With the aid of various experts in my barrack room I contrived to turn out so as to get the stick, an achievement which gave me untold satisfaction.

A rapid loading competition took place in the brigade while we were in the Royal Barracks, and D. Company had the honour of being an easy first. One Sargaison was the greatest exponent of the art, beating all other competitors to a frazzle.

By this time the majority of us had got some idea of how to polish and put on our uniforms so as to satisfy the army idea of the well-dressed man, and turned out with our swagger canes and an air of pride in our off hours. There was one tall youth amongst us who, though an excellent soldier in every other way, did not fill the bill in this. He was approached one evening by a "Red Cap" who opened the attack by asking "Do you call yourself a soldier?"

"Oh, no. I'm one of Kitchener's Army!" was the cheerful reply, which, by its disarming frankness left the military policeman destitute of any rejoinder.

We had three good months in Dublin, during which we overcame our first unfavourable impression of the Royal Barracks, and came to regard it with some degree of affection. At the end of March we got word that we were again to be on the move, our destination being withheld from us with the secrecy proper to Army Orders.

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On April 30, accordingly, we paraded in full marching order, were complimented on our conduct in Dublin by the Colonel, and left in the forenoon en route for the North Wall.

It had been our pleasure from time to time to march through the Dublin streets and show our faces to our admiring friends and fellow citizens, and we had always been kindly received.

Our departure on April 30 was marked by a wonderful send-off. We marched out of barracks with fixed bayonets, that being the privilege of the city's regiment, and took our way along the northern quays, across Essex Bridge, round by Dame Street and Westmoreland Street, and across O'Connell Bridge to the North Wall. This somewhat round-about route was designed to let our friends see the most of us! Streets and houses were packed with onlookers, and before Dame Street was cleared, so great was the throng that only the first platoons could keep any order. The remainder came along as best they could with the crowd. Between the extra weight we were carrying, the excitement, and the crush, most of us arrived at the Alexandra Basin more dead than alive. The crowd attended us to the gates, which they did their best to force. Here we had a short rest and then embarked on our transport. Instead of France we found ourselves in England, and at the end of a long train journey in Basingstoke, Hampshire, which was to be our home till July 9th.

CHAPTER IV.

IN CAMP AT BASINGSTOKE.

BETWEEN May and July the whole of the 10th (Irish) Division, which won no mean name in the East, was assembled at Basingstoke, and the final and severest touches were put upon our training.

Most of the members of that noble corps would freely admit that never in their lives did they work so hard as during this divisional training.

Our camp was a most agreeable and picturesque one when we took up our quarters there in May. A large field sloping considerably to an open laneway at the bottom held the tents of four battalions, the 6th and 7th Dublins and the 6th and 7th Munsters being the 30th Brigade. The 7th Dublins lay on the side nearest the road to Basingstoke, which lay about half a mile away. Between our Company, which was on the outer edge, and the hedge, were stationed a lot of transport mules, which for ways that were dark and tricks that were vain somewhat resembled the "Heathen Chinee." One in particular spent all his time tethered to a stake, no one being able to handle him apart from it. It was not unusual for some of his brethren to break loose from time to time

and take a run through the tents, which usually ended in the truant tangling his feet in the ropes of one of our tabernacles and coming a cropper. As time passed and rain fell and the sun shone alternately, and the grass was all trampled into mud or dust, as the case might be, the stable smell from these neighbours became at times somewhat overpowering.

Across the lane at the bottom of our field, were further details, including the Royal Irish Regiment Pioneer Battalion, which later distinguished itself by a "pick and shovel" charge on the Peninsula. On a day five hundred Royal Irish were digging in front of the lines under cover of a party of Can-naught Rangers. Some three hundred Turks came suddenly, overpowered the covering party, and descended on the Pioneers, whose rifles were some way behind them and unattainable in the short time at their disposal. "Now, lads," said Regimental-Sergeant-Major Richard Conway (of Tipperary), who was in charge of the party, "picks and shovels for it!" Whereupon they threw the heads of their picks at the astonished Johnny Turk and charged him with the handles and shovels. They lost one hundred and twenty killed and a large number wounded, but completely wiped out the three hundred Saracens and recaptured certain of their covering party. For this exploit R.S.M. Conway got the Military Cross.

Our first day was spent in pitching our tents in symmetrical lines and then taking them down again and repitching them, because our first effort did not

satisfy the meticulous eye of the Brigade Major. As each tent contained nine to eleven men and their equipment, the nightly arrangement of beds called for no small amount of give and take.

When the job was finished our field was a pretty sight by day and even prettier by night, with the lights shining through the canvas walls. For the most part May and June were beautiful hot months, but an occasional rainy day revealed some of the flaws of our domicile. So many army boots in so small a space quickly churned the surface into a thick paste, and the lane at the bottom by which we marched in and out promptly turned itself in wet weather into a stream of liquid mud about six inches deep.

Drinking and washing water was obtained at a pipe which ran over a wooden trough at the foot of the field. Whether the water supply of Basingstoke was bad or the pipe was too small I cannot say, but we were generally short of water for washing, and sometimes for drinking. In spite of drawbacks, however, the life under canvas in fine weather was really pleasant.

To turn on a clear summer night from the streets of little Basingstoke, crowded with Kitchener's men in search of spirituous refreshment or bacon and eggs, and wend one's way to the tented field (glimmering with scores of lights) as the bugles of the Division sounded the evening call on all sides, was to feel oneself very near to Fairyland.

We were not long in tasting the delights of Divisional training. The first week found us on the

road again route marching in full equipment along the hot and dusty ways of Hampshire. Full equipment was now the order of the day, and we scarcely seemed to move anywhere without our Atlas load, including iron weights of a couple of pounds each, which were served out to be carried in the ammunition pouches in lieu of cartridges. This ingenious devil's invention was a very sore point. The weights hung heavy on one's hip bones and chafed considerably on a long march. Disorderly people threw them away furtively, inventive ones took unto themselves pieces of wood painted to resemble iron, but the majority endured this fresh vagary of the army powers with what philosophy they could.

Our early days in Basingstoke were spent in long and aimless route marches. Then we blossomed into manoeuvres, in which we left camp on Tuesday morning, marched twenty to twenty-five miles, and bivouacked in the open or were billeted in some empty house, fought a mimic battle on Wednesday, and returned to camp twenty miles or so on Thursday. Reveillé sounded on these mornings at any hour from 3.30 to 4 a.m., to avoid the heat of the day, but we often stood under arms for two or three hours waiting our turn to use the roads congested by the movement of so many troops. The waiting was as tiring as the marching. The guard left in camp had to pay for their three days' rest by standing to attention with arms presented as the troops marched past till they were ready to fall.

Heat and fatigue soon tried the weaker vessels, and the side of the road after the first five miles was

lined with men who had fallen out, some so exhausted that the ambulance was required to remove them. Our company partly through its tradition and partly through wholesome fear of its Sergeant-Major, completed every march intact. Our battalion, indeed, might fairly claim to be the best marching one in the Division. On May 19th reveillé went at 5 a.m., breakfast was at 6.30, and the next meal was at 5 p.m., the interval being spent in a sham battle. After dinner we marched back to camp, which we reached at 9 p.m., having worn our packs for twelve hours.

These sham battles were varied by a march to Aldershot, one of the longest and hottest, for musketry practice, and another to Newbury, of eighteen miles, followed by trench digging by day and by night until Wednesday, when we started on the return journey at 6.30 and got into Basingstoke at 1.30.

The off days were days of leisure except for physical and bayonet training in Hackwood Park, a noble demesne beside the camp. We were further blessed by some days of rain, which were enjoyed to the full in our blankets. In Hackwood the Division was reviewed by the King, accompanied by the Queen and Princess Mary on May 28th, and by Lord Kitchener on June 1st.

Such ceremonial occasions are the cause of much profanity to the common soldier as he polishes all his brass and leather, and later to his superiors as they endeavour to parade him in faultless formation. As soon as the battalion is correctly dressed by the right and has come to a rest after many strong words,

it is ten to one the battalion beyond will shift back a few feet and the blasphemous proceedings must be started anew.

Our Captain, being anything but a good horseman, had an anxious time on these occasions trying to prevent his steed from backing into the front rank. The members of the rank surreptitiously assisted him once or twice, when the hindquarters of the animal approached too near, by giving them a quiet dig with the rifle muzzle. The sudden change to a forward motion had a very disturbing effect on the rider.

The Colonel arrived on his charger, where he always showed to the best advantage, and enquired of the skipper what he would do if a salute was fired. "Commend my soul to God, sir, and hang on," was the reply.

Our Reviewers expressed themselves as well satisfied with us, which, of course, was reward enough for our trouble.

Tenosynovitis, Anglicé, a sprained tendon in the foot, secured me a fortnight of "Attend C" from June 10th. I had recovered in time to take part in the last big march from Basingstoke. Newbury was the venue, and there we encamped on a high common and dug trenches for several days and nights, and then tramped back the eighteen miles to our home. The statement in a local journal that the Brigade had gone to a rest camp at Newbury caused some extra heat to some of those who had sweated through these anything but restful days.

The rumours which were always rife in those days

began to thicken and become more circumstantial at the end of June, and this time our destination, the Dardanelles, was correctly guessed.

Rumour as used in the army having been found a lying jade, I did not place much reliance on this prophecy until our pith helmets arrived, and we were confronted with the problem of getting our puggaree correctly wound round the same. Some handy men did their own. Others of us donated a shilling to some old Indian soldier, who did it in proper style for the consideration.

Our last week was spent in being served out with new equipment and kit bags, and in endeavouring to fine down our earthly possessions to the compass of the said kit bag and a pack—no mean problem.

Inoculation and vaccination had gone the rounds before this, and another final rite was undergone by most of the rank and file. One of the sergeants had secured a hair clippers (some said a mule clippers), and, with several brethren of the three stripes, set about shaving the heads of as many of the men as wished for the performance. When the supply of these failed they chased divers others, laid violent hands on them, and shrove them of their flowing locks. We were given to understand that a Hunnish head was an asset in hot spots like the Dardanelles. It was certainly comfortable, though unsightly.

Being decked in our new khaki drill and topped with pith helmets, we got our photographs taken by Sections for the delectation of our friends and relations—an added interest being given to the picture

by the difficulty of spotting anyone's features under the all-shadowing headgear.

The final order to move was issued to the troops on the morning of July 9th, and, after a day of handing in blankets and the usual cleaning up of our quarters, we marched out of camp at 9 p.m., en route for the railway station. The good citizens of Basingstoke gave us a decent send-off and our departure was most jovial. Their suspicions of the wild Irish which made them rather stand offish in May had been much allayed by July.

The end of Divisional training was lamented by few, and we looked forward with a certain amount of pleasure and interest to the new scenes we were to witness in the Near East.

It appeared to our callow minds that there was more variety and romance in voyaging to fight the Saracen than in a humdrum journey to France. The not far distant future was to prove that the army can always go one better in the entertainment provided for Thomas Atkins, and that Divisional training in hot and dusty Hampshire might be a very good exchange from dustier and hotter spots.

CHAPTER V.

OUTWARD BOUND ON THE TROOPSHIP "ALAUNIA."

WE embarked on the train in entire ignorance of where it was going. At 3.30 a.m. we found ourselves in Exeter, where there were ladies on the platform who gave us cigarettes and refreshments, and at 5.15 a.m. we arrived at Devonport, where we transferred to the Cunard liner "Alaunia," which was to be our home for four weeks. That night we steamed out of the harbour to the sound of cheering from the ships lying round, and escorted by two destroyers. These conducted us past the north-west corner of France, and there bidding us God-speed left us to paddle our own canoe to Gibraltar.

The change from our daily foot slogging to the leisure and ease of an ocean voyage was most agreeable, and the journey was a real picnic. We had on board the 6th Dublins forward, the 7th Dublins aft, and a number of R.A.M.C. details. Our company did not "click" in the distribution of berths, being allotted to the lowest deck, which became so hot and stuffy as we got into southern latitudes that all but a few of us laid our beds on deck and slept nightly under the starry sky. To secure a good spot it was

necessary to stake one's claim early in the afternoon, and late sleepers in the morning were at times rudely awakened by the sailormen hosing down the decks, and any slumberers found thereon. The confined deck space prevented the most earnest sergeant-major from providing much in the way of parades. Kit and rifle inspections and "physical jerks" formed our only employment. The remainder of the time was our own, except for the occasions on which we were put on water guard to watch the taps and see that there was no waste, or bunk guard to prevent thirsty and unscrupulous soldiers from other companies annexing our oil sheets to trade them for bottles of Greek wine in port, or submarine guard while at sea, which consisted in standing gazing over the bulwarks in search of enemy periscopes. Had we discovered one of the latter it is difficult to say what we could have done with it, as our armament consisted of a few machine guns mounted at the side.

Life boat drill was another regular item. Each of us was presented with a life belt, which was to be our constant companion waking and sleeping, and we had "alarms" upon which we were to form up, each platoon by its own boat.

The leisure hours were spent according to the inclination of each, playing "house," "crown and anchor," or cards, or reading the few books on board, which passed from hand to hand, or lying in the sun smoking and watching the changing beauties of the sea. Our voyage all through was favoured with glorious weather and a calm sea, so that even the worst of sailors had no complaint. A large sail

rigged up on deck in the mornings and filled with sea water made a welcome plunge bath, and with a number of baths on the lower deck, enabled us to make up some of our arrears in washing.

Queues were a prominent feature of transport life. A queue stood outside the bathroom in the morning, a queue formed up at the water tap to fill waterbottles, a queue was ranged outside the canteen to buy buns or cigarettes, and the queue which waited for the beer issue knocked all the others into a cocked hat, until it was arranged to provide the precious fluid in a bucket for each section at dinner time.

The food was good, and the novelty of eating at a table again was agreeable after pigging it in fields and on roadsides and in empty houses.

After a wide detour round the Bay of Biscay to avoid the attention of submarines, we reached the Rock of Gibraltar, where we stayed only a few hours and moved on to Malta. Here we stayed a day, and, though unable to get ashore, enjoyed the sight of the pretty town of Valetta, and the naked youths who dived for pennies, and all the unusual sights of a foreign port. From Malta we held our course close to the northern shore of Africa, and got hotter and hotter, so that we streamed with perspiration at our meals though stripped to the waist. The blazing sun on the hot and sandy shores made our situation on board ship feel extra comfortable. There were no signs of life to be seen, though one imaginative warrior asserted in his home correspondence that he was unable to sleep at night for the roaring of the lions and tigers.

Our next stop was Alexandria, where we seemed to have struck the real East. During our three days' stay we had one route march through the town in light marching order. The heat was tremendous, and we were very glad to fall out and rest by the shore outside the town, after passing a palace of the Khedive or some such dignitary. The diversity of colour among its inhabitants from jet black to dead white, and of raiment from the most elaborate to the absolute minimum, the smart police in white uniforms, the tall white houses with balcony over balcony, the new sights and sounds and smells, made our first sight of Alexandria interesting to the last degree.

In Alexandria we took a further step towards the simple life, leaving here the kit bags we had so carefully packed and which we never saw again.

After Alexandria came the Isles of Greece, whose beauty appeared overrated, except at sunset, when their barren hills, bathed in golden light, were worthy of the best that has been said of them. Then we found ourselves in the noble harbour of Mudros, one of a motley multitudes of transports, men of war, hospital ships, etc., etc.

From Lemnos we once again set sail for a destination unknown to all but the privileged few, and, after passing through a strait which rivalled the Trossachs, steamed between two narrow and rocky shores into a great harbour in the Island of Mitylene.

The "Alaunia" had safely accomplished the long voyage from the shores of England to those of Asia Minor with but one exciting incident. Somewhere

south of Sicily, two destroyers suddenly appeared heading for us. Captain Rostron, our skipper, with the same promptitude which had brought him in the "Carpathia" first on the scene of the "Titanic" disaster, swept round immediately and headed for the foremost with intent to ram her. Happily, before any harm was done, the strange craft were found to be Italian, and not Austrian. After a little signalling they passed us by, while we were told to spread ourselves over both sides of the ship, as she had a most acute slope owing to our all hanging over one side, combined with the sudden turn.

In the ten miles of land locked water at Mitylene were gathered H.M.S. "Canopus," a French and a British cruiser, and several transports. The narrow entrance was guarded by guns and lit up nightly by a searchlight. The next ten days were pleasantly spent in glorious sea bathing, boat races, shore marches across the island to a spot from which Asia Minor could be viewed, and an international concert, supplied by the united talent of the "Alaunia" and of the British and French warships, to say nothing of the usual vain speculation as to where we were going next.

Our doubts were solved for us when, on August 6th, we were shipped on a steam trawler, steamed all night, during which some of us slept in a coal hole on board, and found ourselves early in the morning off the low lying shores of Suvla Bay. We were to take our part in the opening of the second act of the tragedy of the Gallipoli Campaign.

CHAPTER VI.

SUVLA BAY.

AS we looked around in the morning sunlight we found ourselves among a number of other transports. A big observation balloon hung in the air not far off, warships were in the background, the thunder of their salvoes was in the air. Sudden fountains springing from the sea near by showed that we were honoured with the attention of the Turkish artillery. On shore our men and horses could be seen moving inland. The 11th Division had gone ashore before dawn and driven the Turks back from the beach with the bayonet. Our job was to push the advantage as far as possible.

Breakfast consisted of a mug of tea and an army biscuit, and was as much as we had appetite for in the circumstances. When the setting sun that evening suddenly awakened me from my absorption in the business in hand, I realised with surprise that I had had nothing to eat all day since the hermit's repast of the early hours.

At 6 a.m. the barges came alongside, each capable of holding about three hundred men. A Company had first use of those which were to land us. These curious vessels had the captain's bridge and the

helmsman's post protected by iron walls. A sloping gangway in the middle of the deck led below, where the landing troops, equipped with pack, rifle, and all, took up their position for the trip ashore. The proceeding seemed safe enough, but the Turk got a direct hit with a shrapnel shell on one barge of A Company and knocked out about twenty-five of the voyagers.

When D Company's turn came to go ashore some of our predecessors were already back, smoking cigarettes and enjoying a "cushy" wound which saved them all further trouble in the matter. It afforded food for philosophic thought to consider the time, money and trouble expended in ten months training of a soldier man who stops a bullet before he can ever set foot on enemy ground. However, most of them lived to fight another day.

As we struggled down the gangway with all our impedimenta, there was a young boy lying on a stretcher on a table in the middle of the lower deck. His foot was bandaged, and his stretcher was full of blood, which poured out as four of us heaved him up and carried him on board the trawler. Having dumped him on deck we took our places again and set out for shore. It was a broad hint of the welcome prepared for us, but things were too interesting and exciting to allow of doleful forebodings.

Our steam barge ran up on a sandy beach without mishap, the hinged gangway in the bow was turned over, and we walked down it on to the soft sand with somewhat of the picnic feeling with which we had often made a landing on Ireland's Eye in the

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piping days of peace. Here we had a feeling of exhilaration in finding our feet on an enemy's shore. The barge was emptied of some odds and ends and returned for another load, and we drew up under shelter of a sandy ridge above high water mark. This was a comfortable and agreeable spot, unvisited by any tokens from Johnny Turk except some fleecy clouds of shrapnel bursting occasionally high over our heads. But other things were in store for us. After a time spent lying in the scrubby ground near the beach we began to move along the seashore before turning inland. The sights and sounds of battle thickened. On our left some soldiers were wading waist deep in the water, trying to get a row boat ashore, while shells fell around them with a splash. On our right were pitiable groups of wounded and dead men, stretched under shelter of the head of the beach. Overhead the shrapnel burst continually. A long, continuous procession of stretcher bearers passed us, carrying inanimate forms to the beach, with pith helmets placed over their faces to save them from the blazing sun.

After a hot and exhausting plug through the sand we arrived at the bed of a stream which was reduced to soft mud. On this spot the Turkish guns had got a perfect range, and burst shrapnel over it low down with the most unpleasant frequency and regularity. The only thing to do was to "rush it" in turn, as much as possible between the bursts. Owing to the many casualties this spot was cheerfully dubbed "Dunphy's Corner," after the place of that name in Dublin where the many funerals of old and young

pass on their way to Glasnevin. At the other side was a sloping rock where we lay with our noses near the ground, and looked back to see some less fortunate followers get it in the neck as they attempted the passage. On the top of the rock stood our Colonel, cane in hand, as cool as if in the Curragh, taking not the slightest notice of the nasty whiz and spit of the shrapnel. Meantime, Major Harrison, of A Company, stood by the stream watch in hand, and timed the shells, signalling to the troops when to come on. Having surveyed the landscape for a while the Colonel said, "Well, we had better be moving," and off we went again.

The objective assigned to us, with the 6th Dublins and 6th Inniskilling Fusiliers, and 5th and 6th Irish Fusiliers, was Chocolate Hill, a commanding position which lay due east from the point at which we had landed. Between us and it stretched Salt Lake, at that season a broad expanse of sand. The original intention had been that the 11th Division should take it when they landed earlier. Their strength had been expended in other directions, and this part of their job fell to us. At 10.30 the order came that we were to go for the hill at all costs, as the troops attacking it were held up. Of course the private soldier like myself had little idea of where he was bound for, and none of the details of the attack.

Instead of going straight for the hill we had practically turned our backs on it when we landed, and marched in a North-North-East direction along the shore for about three thousand yards. Some little way past the deadly stream, which was an outlet

from Salt Lake when under water, we wheeled to the right, passing groups of wounded under the trees, and, extending into open lines, moved forward to attack the hill, still skirting the border of the Salt Lake.

Our packs had been dumped after the first mile or so to allow of our moving more freely under the hot sun. We never saw them again, and of all the possessions we had so anxiously packed in Basingstoke there now remained to us only what we had in our haversacks and pockets.

After the shell swept stream was passed we extended into open order. The 6th Inniskilling Fusiliers and 6th Irish Fusiliers were in front, followed by A Company and our D Company of the 7th Dublins, with the 5th Irish Fusiliers behind.

The next while was spent in running from ditch to ditch over open country. The ground was dried hard and split by the sun, and there was little growth except some odd trees and scrubby bushes. We were attended on our way by shrapnel, and as we came nearer to the hill we heard for the first time the gentle whisper of enemy bullets over our heads. They seemed so plentiful that it required rather more resolution when the signal came each time to rise out of our ditch than it takes to get up on a cold morning. However, the inborn certainty that we must infallibly be "pipped" proved a mistake, and I am inclined to believe that most of them went well over our heads. A young Dublin chap near me at one stopping place gave a sudden choke, stiffened, and lay dead, shot through the throat.

I spent the day with Ball, my friend, according to our agreement on the trawler as we steamed over, to stick together, and with a few other chaps of our section. For most of the time we knew and saw little outside our small fellowship. We dived into our ditch together when the section leader gave the order, and rose and rushed on when he gave it again. We tried to recollect our home training, and to resist the impulse to crowd together in the safer looking spots, or to make for the false security of trees or outstanding bushes. Occasionally one of us tripped and fell on the sun-baked earth, but immediately relieved the feelings of his friends by jumping up and running on. At one spot a shrapnel shell burst low over our line, and one of us was missing at the next stop. We agreed that poor old John Willie was knocked out. He was only stunned for the time. When he woke up he continued on his course alone, and pursuing a straight line, while the advance wheeled to the right, presently found himself in the awkward position of being between the contending parties. It was with some difficulty that he retrieved his mistake after dark.

In the afternoon an appalling roar made me jump almost from the ditch in which I was lying. Our battleships on our left had commenced to shell the Turkish hills on our right over our heads. We listened with pleasure for a time to the thunder of the salvoes, and watched the hill-sides leaping up in clouds of smoke and dust. The Turkish guns had been located, and the navy were trying to put them out of action for us. This we were ignorant of at

the time, but none the less felt the comfortable reassurance which artillery at his back always imparts to the infantry man.

Towards evening our part of the line experienced an unaccountable delay. The signal reached us to go forward, and we occupied our ditch for some considerable time, not knowing how things were going. I chanced to look behind me and to my amazement saw the sun setting over the sea; I suddenly realised that the day which I had thought but half spent was come to an end, and that we had had nothing to eat or drink since our cup of tea and army biscuit of the morning. More pressing affairs had driven all recollections of meal times from our minds. The southern night fell swiftly, the fire slackened, and we rose and pushed forward through some thick undergrowth to the base of the hill, where we met our own troops, and learned that the hill was taken. While we were held up, the lines before us had carried the hill with a bayonet charge after a short bombardment by the naval guns.

The capture of this position, naturally strong and fortified with trenches by German art, was mainly the work of troops of the 10th Division.

Having arrived at the base of the hill and found some of our Company fixed up in a trench, we joined them and passed the night there. Our supper was made on iron rations, that is to say, the bag of small biscuits, tea, bully beef, etc., which is carried by the soldier in action. The night was fine. We were told that the whole hill was in our hands, but, none the

less, we took turns in pairs to lie outside the trench for a couple of hours and keep watch for any stray Turks. Our repose, however, was undisturbed. Late in the night a friend of mine arrived in the dark at the edge of the trench, badly wounded with a bullet through the stomach, and supported by another man. He had been shot down in the closing stages of the attack. As he lay behind some cover an old soldier of another Irish battalion lay down beside him and showed no inclination to go farther. When it was suggested to him that he would get into trouble if he did not go ahead, he said no, he was a married man, and his Sergeant-Major had told him he might stay! Every now and again he regarded my wounded friend and said, "I declare to God you're living a long time for a man shot through the stomach!" The latter suffered his observations in silence, not having breath enough to curse him. When the racket was over two of our Company found him and tied up his wounds, leaving him as comfortable as possible in the belief that he had not long to live. The cold night air apparently revived him, and, being a chap full of vitality, he managed to struggle to where we were. One of his comrades from our trench volunteered to take him to some stretcher bearers, and set off in the dark to find them. After some considerable difficulty he got him on a stretcher belonging to our Company. One of the bearers, being a conscientious soldier, began to argue that they should bring his equipment with them also. It was only when someone said, "Good Heavens, man, can't you see the chap is dying," that he reluctantly agreed

to go without it, saying, "Well, I was always told on the Curragh that we should bring the equipment." Had the whole army been imbued with this spirit there would not have been so much "salvage" during the war. Our friend was duly deposited on the beach, where divers chaplains examined his identification disc, and seeing C. of I. on it, the R.C., C. of E. and others decided he could not belong to any of them, and so he failed to get the spiritual consolation they might have supplied. In spite of all his troubles he lived to fight another day. The battalion lost over one hundred men that day and our Company twenty-two.

Sunday morning broke quiet and peaceable, and we had an opportunity during the day of rest to sort ourselves out from the confusion of the night before. Through all this day we did nothing to advance our cause, and, in the light of later knowledge, it would appear that we observed the Sabbath too well for the success of the job we had taken in hands. That was a matter for the Staff, and the private soldier pottered about contentedly enough and enjoyed what he considered his well-earned leisure. The first quest in the morning was water. A corporal had been despatched with a collection of our water bottles while it was still dark, but, as he delayed his coming, a couple of us set out to see if we could collect some from the dead men who marked our route of the day before. We proceeded along the edge of Salt Lake and secured a few when the sound of bullets passing near us caused us to withdraw,

Near the edge of Salt Lake I saw the new made grave of an officer, with his pith helmet placed on top of it and found it held a Portadown lad from my old school. Farther on I came upon the body of the young fellow who had been shot near me the day before, and was astonished to find how short a distance he lay from the hill. Moving thus among the sad relics of our advance it was borne in on me again that I had solved a problem which exercised me much in my youth—what a battle was like. Now I felt some satisfaction that I had been through a whole day's battle and survived. It is a form of curiosity however, that is soon over-satisfied.

Farther down we came to a well surrounded by a host of Tommies of all sorts of regiments scrambling to fill their bottles. Here we saw a water cart mobbed, and the men in charge trying to save the contents, calling out that it was for the wounded, and here too we were informed that Achi Baba had fallen, a pleasant piece of news, but unfortunately a daily "canard."

We breakfasted on biscuits, and were fortunate enough to secure a fair supply of water in our trench in a tin lined ammunition box.

The only bit of excitement for us on this Sunday was a fire which broke out in the scrub on the hill. Trying to fight it without water in the blazing sun was very hot and exhausting work, and caused me to lose my puggaree through a hot spark burning it through. Wounded men passed down our hill and sound men up during the day. At one point a sniper kept firing industriously. Our well meant warnings

to those passing it generally resulted in their stopping to argue the point.

If Sunday was quiet, Monday morning, the 9th, made up for it. This was indeed a hot and lively day, though it ended quietly enough for me. Early in the morning our lot were taken out of our quiet trench and led up the hill. The day's proceedings had commenced. The continuous undulating roar of thousands of rifles could be heard in the distance. On the hill the nasty venomous whiz of shrapnel was incessant. We reached a trench already apparently full, but we tumbled in amid the curses of the occupants, and sat packed tighter than the last tram from the Pillar, while the Turk poured his blessings on us.

The wire of a field telephone lay near our trench and seemed to be getting frequently broken, as a hot and fussy young R.E. would suddenly appear in the open and start tinkering at it in nervous haste. Having sat here till we were stiff, a party of us was called out. Our colleagues the 6th Dublins were attacking on the left of the hill, and had run short of ammunition, and sixty of us got the job of carrying up twenty boxes of a thousand rounds each. This was killing work. The boxes were very heavy, the going was very bad, and as we approached the scene of contention the surplus bullets came over our way in showers. We ran to and fro with our stuff till we could move no more, and found no one that wanted it, so we finally opened the boxes and strewed the ammunition along the ground, where it would be found by our men if driven back, or by supports

going up. Before this was done several of us were hit. Having rid myself of my old man of the sea I lay behind a stone and panted, while Captain T., who was in charge of some of the others, moved up towards the firing line. After debating whether I should go back to the Company or go forward I made up my mind to the latter course, and then met another of the Company, who agreed to come along, but said he would go nowhere until he had filled his water bottle. We adjourned to a well hard by, where I lay behind a bit of a wall while he wrangled at the well with the other water drawers. We moved forward through some trees while the bullets whipped the leaves off just over our heads. We reached a line of men in a ditch, and as we lay down there someone shouted to retire on the left, and we ran like hares back across a field. My puttee started to come off but I ran on, too intent on reaching the next ditch to bother about it. At this ditch we stopped and nearby I collected another pair of puttees left by some dead or wounded soldier.

Reserves were coming up and I started to go forward again with one regiment. They seemed nervous, and when they lay down there was much shouting of "Come on the —" before they would rise again. This was not what I had been used to, so I let them go and joined myself unto a lot of Yorks, who seemed more at home. In this company I was proceeding in stooping fashion behind a hedge, when a sudden pang in the shoulder and a frightful thump in the back caused me to execute a sort of high dive on the stony ground, and there I lay with a singing in my

ears and a feeling as if my whole body was strung up to its highest tension. My first thought was, "The beggars have got me at last," and my second a kind of irritated surprise, irrational enough, considering that I had been wading through bullets for some hours. Then I fainted for a moment or two, and as I came to I heard some chums near by under the hedge asking was I badly hurt. I replied in a small weak voice which much surprised me. Followed some debate, and then a D Company man who happened to have turned up there said, "Well, don't leave the chap in the open, anyway," and came out with some others and lifted me into the shelter of the bank. Here I fainted again for a few minutes, and when I came to found I was bandaged up. I asked the D Company man to take my glasses to my friend Ball, from whom I had been separated that morning for the first time, and requested some stretcher bearers who were there to take me down. Then I apparently became muzzy again, and when I finally woke up the party were gone and I was left alone to my reflections. It was no time for carrying wounded across the open, and, though I did not realise it at the time, it was probably much better for me to lie quiet for a while than to be jogged along on a stretcher. I had been shot through the right shoulder and lung, and my fall, accelerated by several bandoliers of extra ammunition I still had wrapped round me, had fractured the third, fourth and fifth ribs near the breastbone. These details were, of course, unknown to me at the time. I only knew I had got a genuine "blighty" one. Luckily, I

was under shelter where I lay, and, though I could hear the roar of the battle behind me and the whistling of bullets overhead, I was safe enough so long as our chaps held their own. All I could do was to wait for dark and give them my fervent good wishes in their efforts. Though my estimate of the time is somewhat uncertain I must have been hit before mid-day, and, as I did not get away till the following morning, I must have been some sixteen hours in my ditch. By closing and opening my hands from time to time I found that I was not getting weaker, and so concluded that I could not be dying.

Reinforcing lines of men passed by now and then, and, as darkness came on, I adjured them to send along some stretcher bearers. They were too busy to pay any attention. At length when it was full night with the stars shining and the firing had stopped, I struggled to my feet in spite of the gurgling noises in my back and staggered a few steps. Owing to the broken ribs, I presume, I appeared to have a bad list to starboard, and I was soon glad to lie down again. Here I found myself beside another wounded man who said both his legs were broken, and a third who seemed by his silence to be dying or dead.

At length in the small hours another detachment arrived on their way to the line, and, on my explaining that we should be left to die there if the stretchers did not come along, one of them said that their Major had sent for them. I did not relish the idea of another day in our ditch and thought that the next day's battle might hold us up again. After

dawn the welcome stretcher bearers came, and hoisting us up started the arduous and dangerous journey to the beach. For my part I recked nothing of further dangers. Having got on my stretcher I felt perfectly content. Our first stop was an advanced dressing station, where I was given some beef tea, and our next was at the inland edge of the Salt Lake, where we were laid down with other wounded to await the ambulances. Here I was beside another D Company man with a broken thigh, which put him out of all further warfare. The bullets began to sing over us again and a young chap near me was hit a second time as he lay, and began to cry from the surprise of it. Accordingly our long-suffering stretcher bearers lifted us again and started across the sandy open expanse of Salt Lake. Our troubles were not yet over. British troops were landing near where the wounded were collected by the water's edge, and the Turkish shrapnel, while looking for them, nearly got us. One in particular came very close. My bearers dropped me with a thud and buried their noses in the ground as the bullets from it splashed the sand over us. On our left a couple of bearers dropped their man and ran back a few paces. My men called out "Do not leave your wounded," and they came back at once, picked him up, and we reached the shore without further trouble. At the edge of the sea I was laid down among divers other sick folk, and this was our resting place all through the long blazing hours of Tuesday, August 10th, with no other cover than our pith helmets. Towards evening some of us began to

get a little muzzy. I was not long in position when I saw a Presbyterian chaplain, whom I had known well in Basingstoke, and a medical officer from my old school, who did all they could for me. Shrapnel still burst some distance from us, but the Turk refrained from shelling the wounded.

At last the tardy night fell, and we were carried on our stretchers and placed on a barge on the shore, which took us out to a battleship, the hospital ships being already full. The sea was choppy and every now and then our barge bumped the side of the cruiser, set all the stretchers shaking, and the wounded men groaning and cursing. One by one we were placed, stretchers and all, in a kind of wooden box and swung on board by steam crane like bales of merchandise. On the cruiser we had a quick passage through the night to Lemnos, thirty miles away, while the decent sailormen plied us with beef tea and anything else they could persuade us to take. No clear recollection remains of my transfer to the hospital tent of the Australian Field Ambulance in Lemnos, and the first day or so is chiefly marked by potations of tinned milk from an invalid feeding cup, a beverage which I looked on then as nectar indeed.

So ended my service in D Company of the 7th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, after seven months, a period short in point of time, but long by virtue of the varied experience and the many different scenes which were crowded into it. It was with a distinct feeling of relief that I found myself still alive and out of the hell of Gallipoli, a relief which obscured for the time my loss in parting from the splendid

band of sports and decent fellows with whom I was so fortunate as to learn the rudiments of soldiering. Never again was it to be my lot to find myself in such a goodly company. Though I was happy enough to spend all my service in the same old regiment and to meet hundreds of good fellows, yet the memory of D Company remains supreme as a possession for ever, and to meet an old D Company man afterwards was always to find a friend.

CHAPTER VII.

IN A HOSPITAL TENT AT LEMNOS.

MY first few days in the hospital tent of the Australian Ambulance were spent on the broad of my back, a position unfavourable to general observation. I was able to notice, however, that the marquee, in which I was, was quite an elaborate affair, with a second tent inside, and outer cover, and porch doors at each end.

On the 11th August I was able to write a couple of short notes—on my back—to reassure my fiancée and sister as to my continued existence, and in a few days more I was able to sit up and take notice. My hurts gave me little trouble, except the inconvenience of feeling that I was breathing with only one lung, and an occasional jag from the broken ribs when I happened to give them a twist. It was not, indeed, till six weeks later, when X-rayed in a Birmingham hospital, that I found out I had any ribs broken at all.

The tent contained about fifteen wounded warriors, and some far gone in dysentery. There was on my right a long, thin young man from the borders of Wales, who was shot in the body and thought himself rather bad. If his power of consuming victuals

was any criterion he was safe enough. He was good for two men's dinners any day, and in an hour or so would be up scrimmaging round for any stray fragments left over. On my left lay (at times) a young Australian with synovitis in his knee, acquired, he informed me, through the man next him on a working party being shot and digging his pick into him as he rolled over. This youth of about twenty had been a stock rider and visited a good part of the globe as a sailor. His energy was colossal. As soon as he thought the doctor was safely out of the way, he departed from his bed and the tent to explore the shores of Mudros Harbour, and to return home later after various adventures. We had two other Australians, one, a Queenslander with a badly smashed shoulder and a copious flow of bad language. Small, dark, upright, lithe in his movements, he had a wild air which suggested the panther. The third was tall, bronzed, English born, and slow speaking. Opposite to me was a young English lad shot through the neck, a circumstance which did not seem to give him more trouble than a sore throat. Next to him in the corner was a Welsh footballer with his right hand gone from the wrist. It was threatened with gangrene, I think, and had to have elaborate bathings and dressings. This caused considerable profanity when undertaken by the orderlies by the light of a lantern in which the candle went out at critical moments. When he felt down in the mouth about it he was consoled by the reminder that the stump would still be capable of delivering a very good knock-out blow.

Farther up the tent was a fellow shot through the body, who kept up a continual moaning day and night until severely taken to task one day by the M.O., who informed him that there were men much worse than he in the tent who made no noise about it. Strange to say there was not a sound out of him after that. The dysentery patients seemed much the worst both in spirits and condition, one poor fellow being reduced to skin and bone.

The feeding and care of this tentful fell almost entirely on the shoulders of one Australian orderly, an active, small man of about forty-five, who did nobly by us, not only keeping our bodily wants supplied, but, by his good spirits and lively, though not always edifying converse, maintaining a most cheerful atmosphere. He was aided at times by a couple of young English R.A.M.C. lads and a couple of nurses, who came round to do dressings. These unfortunate ladies seemed somewhat overwhelmed by the mass of wounded and sick they had to deal with. They were kindness itself. At first there were Australian, and later Canadian nurses, but I believe the conditions knocked them up. It happened on some days that the dressings fell to be done by our little orderly, who performed them with the same cheerful efficiency as his other duties. The medical officer, of course, came round daily.

In this haven I remained for three weeks, sleeping with a muslin cloth over my face for the myriad flies to walk on, eating and conversing with my neighbours, and enjoying a turn at "patience," into which I was initiated by my stockriding neighbour, or an

occasional hand of bridge. At this two of the party, having only one hand each available, had to draw out the cards they played with their teeth.

The days were uneventful, but two incidents remained in my memory. One day an unfortunate Australian was carried up from the beach and laid in the next bed to me. The poor fellow was very "crook," as they have it in Australia. His leg had been amputated some time before at the thigh. He had been brought down that morning to go away in a hospital ship, but became so ill on the beach that he had to be brought to our tent. He was not there very long when he died, whereupon our orderly proceeded to wash down the corpse beside me while I was in the middle of my dinner. By this time I was sufficiently case hardened not to allow such matters to damage my appetite. Having completed the ablutions the orderly returned, handkerchief in hand, to tie the feet together. Then he burst out laughing, highly tickled at his mistake, and called out, "Look here, boys, here I am trying to tie this chap's feet together and he has only got one!"

A more pleasant contretemps occurred one day when a strange medical officer about five feet high in a large sun helmet, shirt, shorts, and socks with suspenders, walked into the tent and proceeded to strafe our attendant because some refuse bucket outside was unemptied. I regarded him with astonishment and realised at length that he was my cousin, Captain A. H. Laird, R.A.M.C., whom I had last heard of at Salisbury Plain. Before I had recovered from my surprise he had passed my bed again and

gone out. I hastily despatched a chap after him, and when he returned he recognised me in spite of my beard, and, I presume, somewhat sickly appearance. He was attached to another medical department and only happened by luck to be doing someone else's duty for the day round our way. He proved a Godsend to me, providing me with cigarettes, novels, and a clean handkerchief or two which were useful though I had then stopped spitting up blood.

I had several visits from this good medico until, with characteristic abruptness, I was suddenly notified one evening that I was for a hospital ship next day. Accordingly next morning I was shoved into an ambulance, where I had some difficulty in retaining my place on the stretcher, as we bumped over the ruts on the way to the shore. There I was placed by the sad sea waves and had time to see some of the doings at the water edge. It was a pleasant sight, after watching some Greeks clumsily working their craft along with oar and sail, to see a man of war's boat dash headlong at the landing stage under full sail, and at the last moment glide alongside with a turn of the helm, while the sail fell at the same moment and a bearded sailor with a biceps like a man's thigh stood up and hooked on with the boathook. Anyone who saw our navy in the Mediterranean in 1915 will always take his hat off to them.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOMEWARD BOUND ON THE HOSPITAL SHIP,
"CAWDOR CASTLE."

AT length our barge filled up with stretchers, and we set out for the hospital ship "Cawdor Castle." We pulled alongside and they began to embark us by means of the box crane and donkey engine device of which I had already had experience. It looked somewhat risky now that one had time to contemplate the passage by the light of day, but we were all transhipped eventually without mishap. The only misfortune that befell some of us was that, through mismanagement of our barge, we drifted under the shower of a wash pipe discharging warm and dirty water from the ships. As I was watching with amusement some fellows further down the deck getting it another lurch brought me into the required position, and I went on board after passing through this warm shower bath in my pyjamas.

The "Cawdor Castle" was not a pukka hospital ship—one of those beautiful white vessels with the big red cross amidships on which the unwounded warrior sometimes looked with envious eyes. It was a converted troopship and pretty crowded at that. My billet was a mattress laid on the lower deck,

which felt hard enough at times. However, I was now able to walk about a bit and had not to spend my time entirely on it. We were informed that we were bound for England, but I was now an old enough soldier to know that there was no certainty of getting there until we were at least past Gibraltar.

We passed along the Mediterranean without mishap. The nurse to whose ministrations I was indebted for my daily dressings was a tall and imposing Scotchwoman and a decent soul. On Sunday we had service on deck conducted by the Sergeant-Major R.A.M.C. in default of anything more clerical being on board. Some days later my nurse confided to me that she had entrusted this gentleman with the watch chain and sovereign case of a man who died on board, that he might send them to his wife, and was much perturbed to notice him a day or so later wearing the sovereign case. I strongly advised a report to higher quarters, but she did not like to do it.

We buried about twenty of our number on the way home, mostly dysentery cases. While the funeral service was being read the ship made a circuit, the body was dropped overboard, and we resumed our course.

An Australian lying near me on the deck was smoking a cigarette with the nonchalance of his kind a few minutes before he died. A poor wretch shot in the head got on our nerves at times by continual shrieking for hours on end. Still we were forging homewards day by day. The weather was delightful, and when we had left Malta behind without

being dumped ashore our spirits rose several points. A small, slight, Manchester chap I met on board told me how he had got separated from his crowd on the Peninsula, and wandered on his own for a couple of days. During this time he suddenly became aware of a kneeling Turk taking aim at him about four yards away. His first thought was the bayonet and he promptly rushed him. The Turk, he said, seemed as nervous and his bullet passed by my friend's ear as he closed in on him and gave him the bayonet in the shoulder. Having done so he ran his best for fear any of his friends should be near.

During the journey I oscillated between invalid diet and the ordinary, which was partaken below decks with the walking cases, and was not very appetising; at least I did not find it so. The real reason, I expect, was that the beginnings of jaundice, which I developed in hospital later, were coming on.

At the end of a fortnight we reached Gibraltar and moored in the harbour, where we kicked our heels for a week, earnestly hoping that we were not going to be put ashore. At last our doubts were set at rest, and we sailed for merrie England.

CHAPTER IX.

IN A BIRMINGHAM HOSPITAL, AND TEMPLE HILL, BLACKROCK.

ON September 16th we steamed into Devonport harbour amid the kindly cheers from the crews of the numerous vessels lying there. A field of bright green near the harbour was one of the pleasantest sights we saw after so many weeks of the hot and arid shores of the Mediterranean. It does not seem probable that a son of Erin should ever long for his much abused climate, yet the monotonous sunshine and unclouded skies set me wishing more than once for a little of its endless variety.

Speculation was general amongst us as to where we should be despatched, each man hoping for a location near his home or some friends. For my part I found myself, after a pleasant jaunt in a luxurious hospital train, installed in the First Southern General Hospital, Birmingham, instead of Dublin, for which I had hoped against hope. Whatever might be the destination we all had experience now of the kindly care which England lavished on her wounded soldiers. To lie in clean sheets in a pleasant hospital ward with books galore, as many cigarettes as I could

smoke, and plenty of good feeding, was luxury indeed after the weeks that had gone before. Being now convalescent, except for a slight attack of jaundice, I was in the mood to enjoy all these good things. I do not think I was ever so rich in cigarettes, or ever shall be again, as I was in those weeks through the good offices of my friends, and I made a notable effort by lighting one from the other to get through them. Best of all was it to hear again, after a blank of two and a half months, from my kith and kin. Such pleasures were more than sufficient to compensate for the unfortunate habit, common to hospitals, of turning us out at some ungodly hour in the morning, for bed-making and such-like tricks. Our night sister was active and determined, and, though I held on to the last possible moment, the bedclothes would be hauled off in the end. In the daytime we were tended by two sisters with hearts of gold, Sister M—t, neat and dainty, who specialised in silk stockings, and Sister M—y, stout, full of gaiety, and as Irish as her name. The Matron was only known as a solemn presence which stalked through the wards at stated intervals, and bowed a grave greeting.

Sunday was a gala day in the hospital. We were invaded by a host of the grateful public, and even those who had no friends were donated cigarettes, etc., by the philanthropic. One lady in particular I remember who, with her daughter, went the round depositing at each stopping place an egg, a few cigarettes, some sweets, some grapes, a plum, etc. There was also the Rev. W. W. Holdsworth,

who, having no students left in his Theological College, visited the wounded.

The visits of friends were not always unattended with embarrassment. A nice young chap in the next bed to mine was put to considerable pain of mind, because his parents announced their intention of arriving on a Sunday in which he had fixed to see a girl of whom they did not approve. He solved the problem in time by arranging with the girl to come on another day. The young Adonis had further difficulty in fending off another damsel who proposed to pay him an unwelcome visit.

My next neighbour there was an Australian, one of the most incessant talkers I had ever experienced. He butted in gaily on reading, letter writing, or any other occupation, with his conversation of the habits of Ghurkas and Turks and the manner in which Turkish prisoners had been disposed of. Like most Australians I have met he was a good fellow all the same. Later the storm of a big attack in France threw up a couple of ripples beside me in the shape of two Connaught Rangers hailing from Tuam and Roscommon. Their mellow tones were a grateful relief after the Cockney and Colonial accents to which I had listened so long.

The Roscommon man was a Reservist and a post-man in civilian life. He was very shy and hated to have womenfolk messing round him. He had been out since the start of the show, and in about eleven battles, and had come through without a scratch. His sense of humour was at times somewhat grim. "I had to laugh one day," he said, "I was sitting

in a shell hole and we were shelled pretty heavy, and a buck nigger went by with a box of bombs on his head. Just when he went by a shell blew him up, bombs and all, and his two feet came down on top of me!"

The day he was due for a slight operation they wakened him very early and gave him a light breakfast, as the custom is. This he duly absorbed. Then when the regular breakfast came along a thick-headed orderly placed before him a solid ration, which he, asking no question for conscience sake, put down on top of the other. There was the devil to pay when the mistake came to light, and the operation was, of course, postponed.

My Tuam friend told me that, though he had been in numerous bayonet charges, and even up against the Prussian Guards, he had only "stuck" a man twice. The Prussian Guards, he said, were somewhat awe inspiring when they charged, all big men with their helmets on the back of their heads.

The hospital was infested by a terrible gramophone on which the next ward used to regale themselves and us by the hour with wheezy interpretations of "Land of Hope and Glory," "It's a Different Girl Again," "A Dear Old Land is the Motherland," and last, and unhappily not least, "Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling." This being the favourite was churned out at all hours and sounded somewhat blasphemous on this dicky old instrument.

A curious fact which I noticed here was that Scotchmen, usually considered a taciturn race, appeared much the most noisy and talkative when

recovering from ether. It was quite an entertainment when one was brought in from the operating theatre and deposited in his bed full of song, jesting, and cursing.

Soon after my arrival I had my X-ray photo taken, and discovered to my surprise that I had had three ribs fractured near the breast bone since August 9th. They were then pretty well healed on their own.

As the days went by I began to hear of many of my friends who had gone under. My old Company was severely mauled after I left it, and among others my chief friend Ball was reported killed. While waiting on the beach with other sick (he was ill with dysentery) a shell fell near him, and wounded one of his comrades. True to his nature he waited to help in the wounded man instead of rushing to cover. A second shell followed the first and he was struck in the back. In his weak condition he had not vitality to make a fight for life and died some hours later. He was buried by the sea. Thus very soon was fulfilled a presentiment he mentioned to me one day in Basingstoke, that he would not live to be very old, at which I then laughed. A silent and reserved Englishman, it did not take a long acquaintance to find the kindness that lay behind his modest bearing, and the strength that made him a man not to be trifled with. It took longer to discover that he had already made a name for himself, and would have gone far in his calling had he not found a glorious end in Gallipoli. He was a friend on whom one might count for a lifetime.

Having progressed far enough to don my blue suit and red tie and walk in the hospital grounds, I turned my thoughts to where I was to convalesce, and began to move heaven and earth, so far as in me lay, to get a move to Dublin. There were many knots of red tape to be untied, but eventually, by reason of wires pulled at the other end by my fiancée, I got a sudden order to go, and, equipped in a brand new Tommy's outfit, set off for my native city. After one night in King George V. Hospital I was sent in the first week in November to Temple Hill Convalescent Home, Blackrock, a fine old house in extensive grounds. Here I was indeed in clover, and the hours off, from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. daily, and from 1 p.m. to 10 p.m. twice a week, seemed unexampled liberty after so many weeks of close confinement. The only work I had to do was cleaning the Matron's shoes, which might fairly come under the designation "light duty."

I proposed to get married as soon as I left Temple Hill, and to utilise the Tommy's ten days' leave for the purposes of a honeymoon. The doctor kindly consented to put me out on the day I wished, and I left this pleasant abode on November 30th, was married on December 1st, and, having contrived to wangle an extra week from the Colonel at Naas dépôt, spent a pleasant and profitable seventeen days. The last part of this period was spent in London, partly on pleasure, and partly on a visit to the War Office with a view to obtaining a Commission in the Army Service Corps. The first obstacle I encountered was that I was now only passed as fit

for home service, and would have to pass for active service before my application would be considered.

The A.S.C., however, proved to be too popular, and in process of time I found myself in the late autumn a Second Lieutenant in the "poor bloody infantry."

CHAPTER X.

THE R.D.F. DÉPÔT, NAAS.

LIKE all good things my seventeen days of liberty came to an end, and I reported to the Dépôt at Naas in the middle of December, 1915, and, having had my blankets served out to me by Spud Murphy, and a bed in the barrack room appointed to my use, I became one of the collection of unfit soldiers gathered there under the benevolent command of Colonel Briggs. Here I first lived at really close quarters with the old toughs of the Dublin Fusiliers, and soon found that, though their manners might not fit with drawingroom standards, a rough exterior commonly covered a decent heart. There were few really bad eggs in my experience of the rank and file. Even Private X—, tall, thin, with well-waxed moustaches, who was drunk whenever funds permitted, was yet one of the most light-hearted and cheerful customers I ever met. A friend of mine observed to him one day, "You may be a blackguard, but you are a cheerful blackguard, anyway."

"That's just what the magistrate said to me," was the reply, "when I was up for trying to cut my brother-in-law's throat!"

Even the company of old soldiermen, though

pleasant and interesting through their various little idiosyncrasies, could not altogether soften the drop from a honeymoon spent between a bungalow in Co. Wicklow and the Strand Palace Hotel, London, to the bare barracks of Naas Dépôt. The latter could not be called luxurious by any stretch of language, and the town of Naas itself offered no diversions in off hours except a publichouse or bacon and eggs in Lawlor's Temperance Restaurant. Luckily week-end passes to Dublin were easy to get, and old friends of my late Company, convalescent from their wounds, kept arriving from time to time. The first I met was one Anderson, whom I had last seen in the middle of our first night at Suvla Bay shot through the body, and in sore straits. He was now Corporal of the Guard on the Barrack gate. Another old friend was "Father M—," the drill sergeant who had superintended my first steps as a recruit on the parade ground of Gough Barracks, and who now appeared in all the pomp and circumstance of a Sergeant-Major. He was decency itself, and offered me the free use of his room whenever I liked. He still enjoyed a good evening, and I remember his relating one morning, after a rough night with a couple of D Company men, how he had found himself in bed next morning "with his boots off"—a circumstance which he seemed to regard with honest pride!

There were here practically no parades and no duty, though, in true army style, we were called upon by the permanent orderly sergeant to "show a leg" each cold wintry morning at 6.30 a.m. One

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of my friends, a bank clerk, on his first morning, having complied with this request, promptly withdrew the member again under the blankets as soon as the sergeant had departed. Sergeant Doyle from long experience was wise to this manoeuvre, and reappeared in a few minutes with loud cursings. "He asked me," said the unfortunate victim, in aggrieved tones, "if I thought this was a bloody hotel!"

My friends' nights were not always peaceable in that barrack room. One was disturbed by a young tough more than half seas over, who brandished a large knife and informed the room in general how he had sworn an awful oath to bury it in the heart of some officer who had offended his dignity. The difficulty was solved by his falling asleep, when the knife was filched from him.

After about a week in the barrack room I was appointed a member of the regular guard on the barrack gate. It consisted of a sergeant, corporal, and three or four men. This position had the advantage of being more peaceable than the barrack room, except when there was a drunk in the rowdy stage in our detention room. There was also a good fire there at all times, and a good deal of entertaining company now and then as old soldiers of one sort or another came in for a warm up and a yarn. Sergeant J—, commander of the guard, was a white-haired veteran who had fought at Rorke's Drift. He was a decent old chap and had a pious strain in him, and when he knelt down at night to say his prayers, some of the ungodly sergeants who visited

us used to turn on their strongest language for the purpose of "getting his rag out."

The duty consisted in hanging round the barrack gate for spells of three or four hours, with a stick in one's hand, and interviewing unauthorised persons who wished to enter, submitting warriors who seemed to have drink taken to the inspection of the sergeant before allowing them to proceed to their barrack room. Those who seemed to have passed the limits of self-control were consigned to the detention room, the operation of taking off their boots devolving on the members of the guard. Failure to do this might mean a sleepless night for us all listening to the foot-gear being thrown against the door. I remember a Scotchman who drilled himself for hours one night. "Jock, quick march," he would say, and off he would go up and down in his stocking feet. Then, "Jock, halt," and he would come to a stand. "Jock, why did you join the army?—the army!" and so on ad infinitum.

One night about 11 p.m. a knock came to the barrack gate, and two or three large R.I.C. men appeared outside and informed the sergeant that a couple of our men were using very bad language in a row outside a publichouse down the town, and asked would he mind fetching them in, as the Urban Council had lately passed a resolution about the use of bad language in the streets!

The day's labours were generally mitigated by a visit with some of my old comrades in arms to the coffee bar in the far corner of the barracks, where Harry dispersed tea and "sausages and mash." The

week-ends were generally spent in Dublin, whence we departed on Sunday night with hundreds of jovial soldiers from Kingsbridge, and walked the two miles from Sallins station.

On one of these nights I was with a short but stout Englishman and a huge Irish Civil Servant. The latter was pretty well "jarred," a condition in which he was ever "sudden and quick in quarrel." Anon a civilian came cycling along the footpath ringing his bell. The Englishman got off, but the Civil Servant shouted to him not to give way, and ran over and forced the cyclist to take the road. He, having got to a safe distance, turned and cursed us roundly and went upon his way. The next unfortunate cyclist came along the path in the opposite direction, and when our friend saw his light he rushed over, bunged into his front wheel and upset him against the hedge. When he got on his feet he added a punch in the jaw. The cyclist for a moment appeared to be about to retaliate. He looked round, however, and saw us two soldiers standing by on the road, whereupon he picked up his bicycle and disappeared, running as hard as he could in the night. I daresay he thought we were all drunk and prepared to give him a severe dressing. The Civil Servant went on his way well pleased, remarking that these civilians must be kept in their place.

This same man had been returned to duty at Naas under somewhat of a cloud from the hospital in which he had been in Bristol. On his last night there he broke out, went down town, returned "glorious," and proceeded to make a considerable racket. The

Matron, a notable terror, was sent for, and came full of dignity to quell him. She was a little woman and he listened to her for a minute or two, then solemnly picked her up, kissed her, and set her down again. Next morning he was "fired" without the normal ten days' leave, but in the interval he was the most popular man in the hospital, visited by all who wished to see the hero who had ventured to kiss the Matron. With his usual luck he applied and got his leave as soon as he arrived at the Dépôt.

CHAPTER XI.

A RECRUITING TOUR.

THE somewhat monotonous life of duty on the barrack gate, and slumber in a cell in the guardroom, was pleasantly diversified in the middle of January by employment in a recruiting campaign in Wicklow and Kildare. Our first essay was in the back parts of Co. Wicklow, such centres of population as Vallemount, Lacken, Hollywood, Blessington, Kilbride, Dunlavin, Donard, and Grangecon. The cast consisted of a band of eight or nine men of the 3rd Hussars and several speakers, The O'Mahony, Lieutenant Carroll, Sergeant Devoy of the 1st Dublins, and myself. A couple of bandsmen were good speakers, and took a turn also. One, F—by name, versed in Darwin, Haeckel and Lodge, was a very ready debater, prepared with a rapier reply to every interruption. He informed me that he had addressed a meeting in Bray at which O'Leary, V.C., was one of the speakers. When F—'s turn came to speak he had been refreshing himself so much that he had considerable difficulty in climbing on the roof of the cab which formed their rostrum, particularly as two of the wheels were in the gutter. He stumbled on top, but covered the mishap by a little step-dance, and then went off in

great style. When he had carefully climbed down and steadied himself by the cab, he found one of the organisers, a stout and jolly gentleman, lying up against the cab laughing.

"A very good speech, F—," he said. "A very good speech indeed."

"Thank you, sir," said F—, moving.

"By the way," said the other, "there is one thing that you left out."

"What was that, sir?" said F—.

"You did not say one word about recruiting!"

Our mode of operation was to arrive on a fair day or on Sunday after Mass. The band paraded a few times up and down and then the speaking began from a car or a couple of forms. The band got hold of likely converts and drank with them in adjacent publichouses to fire their martial ardour. In spite, however, of all the music, eloquence, and good liquor that was used in these weeks, the results were almost nil. The rustics of Kildare and Wicklow, who remained at home in January, 1916, had apparently made up their minds to stay there for the duration.

Our promoters returned from one meeting flushed with the acquisition of three recruits, but when they came to be examined by the doctor, one had been in the asylum, one had heart disease, and one was blind of one eye!

At Lacken we addressed the congregation coming from Mass. A Major, carried away with the torrent of his own eloquence, ordered out a half barrel of stout from an adjoining publichouse. It was rolled into the crowd and opened amid much interest.

Then it was surrounded by a crowd of old farmers, far past military age, who soon left nothing but the smell and all went home.

Though we did not materially add to the strength of the Allied forces, I found this travelling round the country and billeting in village pubs a very agreeable change. My companions of the Hussars band were a very decent crowd, some of them men of education, and Sergeant Devoy was one of the very best. F— of the band was an excellent raconteur, and told most interesting stories of the days of Mons. One, I remember, was of an occasion when, with an officer and ten other men, he had penetrated far to the front on reconnaissance. Just as they were about to return, and the officer was taking a last look round, a Uhlan officer and orderly appeared on their horses on the crest of the hill, about four hundred yards away. The officer signed to his men who lay concealed to take aim, and as the Germans turned gave the signal to fire. The officer fell and the orderly galloped away unharmed. Having duly cursed his men for bad shooting, the officer led them up to where the Uhlan lay. He was a Prussian officer in gorgeous uniform and helmet faced with silver and gold. As he was not yet dead, and, as F— said, "Those were the days when we were still polite," they offered him a drink, but he would not have it.

"I will take nothing from an Englishman," he said. "I know I am dying. Stand aside, and see how a Prussian can die."

They could not find out who he was, nor get any information from him. When they examined the

body there were eleven bullet wounds. Each man had marked down the officer and hit his mark! When he died they laid him on a stretcher in the middle of the road so that the Germans could find him when they advanced, with a note saying they had done all they could for him.

Another of F—'s stories was of an incident in the retreat from Mons. An officer in charge of a small detachment of cavalry was sent forward to reconnoitre a village from which the Germans were expected to advance. He found the enemy approaching the far end of the village, and hid his men in an ambush on the outskirts, and sent off for a second machine-gun to be brought up as quickly as possible. With his two machine-guns commanding the main street he waited till the German column had advanced well down, and then he opened fire and swept the street. The Germans fell in hundreds, and tried to scramble through the windows and doors and were shot half way through. Meanwhile F— was sent up by the General to find out who had possession of the village. He came up as fast as he could and tried to get through a thick-set hedge on the outskirts and stuck half way. While he was struggling to get through a little officer came up—he was a small man with a bread and cheese sandwich in one hand and a revolver which he was twisting round in the other. He was as cool as a cucumber.

“Who the devil are you?” he said, taking a bite of his sandwich. “If you do not stop quiet I will put a bullet into you.”

F— explained that he had come from the General with a message.

“Well,” said the little man, “come out of that hedge.”

“I cannot,” said F—, “I am stuck.”

Then the little man called two of his men to pull him out, and they lugged him through and set him on his feet.

“Now,” said the little man, “what do you want to know?”

“I want to know,” said F—panting, “who is in possession of the village?”

“I am,” said the little man, strutting about like a game cock.

“But,” said F—, “the General wanted me to bring back some particulars.”

“What do you want to know?” said the little man.

“Are there any Germans in the village?” said F—.

“Yes,” said the little man, “hundreds of them—dead beggars!”

Sergeant Devoy of the 1st Dublins, small, quiet, modest of demeanour, D.C.M., Croix de Guerre, and an old Clongowes boy, was a most agreeable companion during these days, and, as we billeted together, I had plenty of converse with him. His people had destined him for the priesthood, but he took matters into his own hands and departed to sea, where he spent some years as a super cargo. Then he found his way into the army, and had spent five years in India before the war. He had been on the “River Clyde” at Beach Gallipoli. He was in one of the boats which first attempted to land. Man

after man was hit, and then a shell burst over them and knocked the boat to pieces. He swam to a barge nearby and caught the side, but was unable to climb on board, as the Turks had a machine-gun trained on it, and it was covered with dead British. Here he hung for several hours till he was got on board the "River Clyde" after dark and his legs and feet chafed into life again. Next morning he had to go ashore by the gangway. He noticed that a machine-gun from Seddul Bahr fort, into which you could have thrown an orange from the steamer, was playing on the end of the gangway, and each man was hit as he got there. Accordingly, throwing away his rifle and equipment, he dived off the side of the gangway and swam under water to a rock which gave some shelter, and from it made his way to the slight bank of sand on the beach under which the survivors found shelter. When they drove the Turks through Seddul Bahr there was very hot fighting. It was necessary to follow them through winding passages of the fort, where his party was led by an officer followed by the toughest blackguard in the regiment. The officer's face was soon bleeding from chips of stone sent flying by the bullets fired at him as he rounded each corner.

While in the fort Devoy and a comrade went into one large empty room with a few rugs in the corner. The silence after the din without seemed eerie, and Devoy said he was going, as there was no one there. "Wait a minute," said his friend, "till we make sure," and fired into the rugs, when a Johnny Turk rolled out.

When asked how he got the D.C.M. Devoy explained that when the hill went on fire one day, he found a bag of what he took to be tins of jam and ran off with it, thinking it would be acceptable in the mess, and it turned out to be bombs!

I parted from this good friend in Naas in February, 1916, when he went for a Commission. I met him next in January, 1918, at the base in France,, a captain with five wound stripes, and a chest covered with ribands. He had made good use of his time, and happily he survived to become an officer of the Indian Army.

At the second chapter of our recruiting experiences there were bigger meetings and more imposing platforms of speakers, including, on one occasion, Sir Henry McLaughlin, who came down from Dublin and made the finest recruiting speech I have ever heard. These were held in the principal cities of Kildare, such as Naas, Athy and Castledermott, but the net result was failure. The remaining youth of these parts reserved itself intact for our own "Irish war." To do Kildare justice it should be said that many parts, such as Naas and Athy in particular, had already sent a noble proportion of volunteers to the front.

CHAPTER XII.

DUBLIN AND THE EASTER REBELLION, 1916.

FROM the itinerant orator I relapsed again for a short time to the office of barrack policeman, and then was drafted to the 10th R.D.F. in the Royal Barracks, Dublin. My second sojourn in this venerable pile was very pleasant. The 10th was called the Commercial Battalion, and was in process of formation mainly from chaps engaged in business. The men were a very decent crowd. The old members of D Company of the 7th Dublins, who were drafted in in considerable number to give the assistance of their vast experience, were very well treated. In particular we were allowed to wear proudly a yellow shoulder cord or "lanyard" as a distinctive mark.

The assistant-adjutant was an old D Company man who had just got his Commission. The sergeant-major of our (C) Company was another, and the sergeants and corporals of C Company were mainly 7th Dublin men also. The training, after our first experiences in the Curragh, Dublin, and Basingstoke, seemed child's play. We had a Rugby footballer of International fame as our captain, who took the

company out one day for a route march, brought them as far as the first shady trees in Phoenix Park, where they "fell out" and lay down till they were due to start back. As they were about to re-enter barracks he exhorted them to "look as tired as possible." Needless to say this was a popular officer.

Soon after joining I discovered that I was entitled to claim seven days' leave and a free railway warrant, promptly did so, at the same time drawing all my back pay except three pounds. As the railway warrant was free I asked for one to Achill, and spent there a most enjoyable week with my wife, though it was the month of March. The cliffs and bogs of this beautiful island, so far removed from sight and sound of war, were a refreshing change.

I had not been long with my new lot when I was offered and took a single stripe, and in the dignity of unpaid lance-corporal took charge of a section of the platoon, my duty being to see that they were present on parade, to supervise them there and on the march, and to give them the benefit of my store of military lore. I was also, jointly with another lance-corporal, in charge of the large barrack room in which the two sections slept. The last task was complicated now and again by the necessity of composing rows, particularly those fomented by an ex-R.I.C. man who, though a decent fellow when sober, was "sudden and quick in quarrel" in his cups. I had just arrived up several flights of stairs one night, carrying my bicycle, when the door of our room was burst open as I reached it, and a confused throng poured out, almost shoving me and my bicycle out

through the landing window. When I had regained my equilibrium I discovered the nucleus of the affair to be our constabulary friend guzzling some "stranger" who had come in and offered some affront to the room. Having ejected him with much pomp and circumstance his wrath was somewhat assuaged, and it was possible to throw some oil on the troubled waters. I am glad to say that we were always able to get along without "criming" anyone.

Just before Easter, 1916, a special emergency body was formed of those who had seen service. We were instructed to be ready to fall in at a moment's notice when the alarm was sounded, and to this end we had alarms sounded at odd times, when we had to rush on the parade ground at our best speed, induing our accoutrements and arms as we went.

In spite of these warnings of the coming storm, Easter Monday found us unsuspecting. I had managed to leave barracks early in the day and gone to my wife's home to go for a walk up the Dublin mountains with some friends. Just before we started my mother-in-law came in and said a tram conductor had told her the rebels had taken the G.P.O. We thought nothing of it and set out for Milltown station. After waiting some time vainly for a train we were informed by a man who walked up the line that the rebels had taken Harcourt Street station.

Still blind to what was happening we set out on foot. Some way up the hills we met a Major of my acquaintance in charge of "G.R." out for a day's manœuvre. He told me they were going back, and

I had better return to barracks. Luckily I did not elect to go with them, as they lost several of their number later as they were entering Beggars' Bush Barracks.

We took our lunch and returned to Rathmines. As we did so there was a general feeling of uneasiness in the air. Everyone seemed to be out looking for any news that came along. Having taken some tea I set out on my bicycle in uniform for the Royal Barracks about 5 p.m. Portobello Bridge was impassable, as the rebels had occupied a publichouse beside it, and the soldiers were firing on them across the canal. Accordingly I rode for the next bridge at Clanbrassil Street, negotiated it safely, and was proceeding down the South Circular Road when I was hailed by an officer inside the closed and guarded gate of Wellington Barracks. I informed him who I was, and he informed me that I had better come inside, as I was riding straight into a rebel stronghold in Dolphin's Barn. I complied and took up my quarters in Wellington Barracks, where I remained for the next ten days, listening to the roar of guns and the rattle of machine-guns and watching Dublin burn.

The population of Wellington Barracks consisted of about a hundred crocks, who formed the nucleus of a garrison battalion, and another hundred waifs and strays like myself, who had blown in. Their arms had been sent away for some reason a few days before, so that on this first night we had just six rifles in the whole barracks to arm the guard, of whom I formed one. Luckily no one came near us.

In the next few days we received a supply from Portobello Barracks, and felt easier in our minds.

Some of our number were not at all happy at first. One corporal in particular, of the R.D.F.. I regret to say, was very windy. When an attack was feared he suggested that we should retire to the top landing, on the ground that the rebels who should come in hot to cut our throats would have their rage abated by the climb up a few flights of stairs! There was one of the most dapper little sergeants of the Air Force I ever saw, always spick and span, and always clicking his heels, who complained bitterly that he had brought his wife and family over to Dublin to be safe from air raids and now found them in the middle of a rebellion!

In spite of divers alarms and excursions we had but one man killed and an officer wounded. A ration party of a sergeant and three men, sent out one day, walked into a trap down some side street. Fire was opened on them suddenly from the houses, and one man was shot through the head. Another man ran straight on and disappeared. The sergeant and the third, a mere boy, retreated slowly, firing as they went, and reached barracks safely. The missing man turned up later in civilian clothes and his uniform was afterwards handed in, made up in a parcel, at the barrack gate.

The wounded officer belonged to the Colonial Cavalry. He had come with a servant in a motor car. As the latter was lifting out a rifle one day from the body of the car, a loud report occurred and everyone took cover. Confidence was restored when

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it transpired that the rifle had gone off accidentally and shot the officer in the leg.

A lieutenant of the garrison battalion rather plumed himself on his marksmanship. One day he espied a sniper on a church tower several hundred yards away. He took careful aim and had the satisfaction of seeing his man fall. Next day word came that it was the rector of the parish, who had gone up there and paid for his ill-timed curiosity with a bullet through the arm.

When a proper supply of arms was obtained I was made Corporal of a guard in the officers' mess, under command of a little old sergeant of the regulars who had served with the Dublins in the Boer War, and had many yarns, how they played pitch and toss with sovereigns when their back pay was foolishly dished out to them in this form in the middle of the veldt, where they had no other way of enjoying it.

On this guard I remained quietly indoors during the remainder of the ten days. The windows of the officers' mess commanded the principal gate of the barracks. Here we watched armoured cars go by, some made of boilers with holes punched in them mounted on motor chassis.

One day we saw an English brigade go by, complete with transport, field kitchens, and all their outfit. "Now," we said, "the show must be over." But the tail of the column had not passed our windows when hot firing broke out down the road, and the soldiers lay down and took what cover they could find in front gardens and behind bushes. Anon an officer arrived hot foot to ask for the assistance of

a bombing party from our barracks. The rebels had occupied two large houses at some distance from each other, and opening fire simultaneously on the soldiers in the street, had stopped the column in front and cut it in the middle. To add to the trouble there was in the part cut off a wagon load of bombs which, if set off, would have done considerable damage to the neighbourhood. When our bombing party arrived the enemy made themselves scarce by the back doors, content to have made a diversion. The most amusing part of these affairs was the difficulty of prevailing on civilians to clear off and leave us the streets clear for our scrap.

We were little troubled by hostilities. An industrious sniper took his station each evening about seven o'clock on the roof of a corner house up the road, and did his best to pick off our sentry at the gate. A few barrels filled with earth frustrated this project, but our friend persisted night after night for an hour or two, when he knocked off and went home to bed. Though the house was raided several times nothing was discovered.

During these days we were cut off from all news, and the wildest rumours of landing of the Germans on the west coast and other prodigies, prevailed. After some time I succeeded in giving a note to a boy at the barrack gate, which he very kindly delivered at my wife's home in Rathmines, reassuring her as to my safety and my whereabouts.

At length the Spartan measures of General Maxwell prevailed, and the rising was quelled with the destruction of a large part of Dublin's most famous

thoroughfare, and I betook myself again to my quarters in the Royal Barracks. Here I heard how the emergency guard on Easter Monday had been suddenly called out and found itself under fire in the street immediately. The officer in charge was shot dead, and the guard had to take cover, some in adjoining houses and some under a tramcar left standing on the quay. From this point of vantage they busily engaged in urging various girls and others, who were drawn by curiosity at this unwanted sight, to go away for fear they would be shot. The battalion afterwards took a leading part in the attack on some of the rebel strongholds, and lost several of its members in doing so.

One of my first duties, on reporting to the 10th, was to act as corporal of a guard at night on the captured Four Courts. We had to bivouac on the footpath outside, where, though it was a cold night, one of my guard slept so soundly on the pavement that it was quite a job to waken him for his turn of duty. Another of them, about whom there was a mixture of knave and fool, had been posted with full instructions. The visiting officer unfortunately appeared during his period, and to the challenge "Who goes there?" replied "Visiting rounds," as usual. To this my sapient sentry, instead of the orthodox rejoinder, "Approach visiting rounds and be recognised," delivered a new coined answer of his own, "Visit on!"

Much of the time which should have been spent in training during succeeding weeks was occupied by guards only. There were, of course, extra guards

in barracks. There were also guards to be supplied for such places as the Four Courts, the Magazine in Phoenix Park, and the ruins of Linenhall Barracks, at all of which I had my turn. It was soft work, but, on the other hand, had a spice of reality about it wanting to ordinary training. The powers responsible for keeping the peace decreed on another day that the streets should be patrolled, and our district lay north of Rutland Square. The Company had as their guard-room the schoolroom of Findlater's Church, from which we issued in small parties and paraded the streets with our shooting irons. If any further trouble was designed by the rebellious party, our warlike front must have discouraged it. By degrees we returned to more normal conditions and there was less and less of the "confined to barracks" business, which is so heartily cursed by the Tommy.

The days of the rising saw some very curious adventures. A friend of mine was home on leave from the Black Watch Territorials in France, and reported at the nearest barrack, where he was told to get into "civvies" and keep quiet. He took the first part of the advice but rather neglected the second, in that he went down town to see the fun, got caught between the two contending parties, and was finally arrested by the military and lodged in Arbour Hill military prison, where he spent several days during which his brother made an anxious search for him. At length he succeeded in proving his bona fides and was released.

At the same time was interned there a cavalry officer, who had been sent across town in plain clothes

and had been stopped by a zealous sentry. He was a very small man, and when he asserted his rank and calling they declared that there never was a cavalry officer so small, and ran him in! He was not of a temper to accommodate himself readily to this topsy turvy fortune, and my friend was much pleased at times to hear the gaoler growl at him—"If you want a thick ear, just you ring that bell again."

My tall and bellicose Civil Servant, of the Naas Road incident, had a more unpleasant time. He was almost captured in the street but managed to throw off his assailants and escape into Linenhall Barracks. This place could not be defended and was taken and burnt, he, with the other occupants, being made prisoner. He was thrust into a cell in the Bridewell Police Station, and remained for days there, subsisting, I believe, on champagne and bread. When the Four Courts adjacent was retaken by the British forces he was forgotten in his cell, and only found by accident when much exhausted by hunger. When released he found that his father had been shot dead.

He had recognised among his captors a member of his own department in the Civil Service, but made no move against him at first. Some days later, however, an envelope was handed in to him by some men at his home, containing a ten pound note with the intimation that there was more to be had from the same source if he would keep his mouth shut.

Thus coerced he returned the money and next day requested the use of a few men from his C.O. With these he hied him to his old office, and asked the chief to permit him to remove one of the staff. The chief

replied that he would be only too pleased if he took the half of them (the office being more than tainted with Sinn Fein). Accordingly our friend, having posted his men at the doors, walked up to his late captor at his desk, and carried him off amid the smiles of his loyal and black looks of his Sinn Fein colleagues. The rebel, a somewhat unsavoury looking, ginger-haired gentleman, was lodged in the guardroom of the Royal Barracks, whence it was my pleasant duty some days later with two men to march him to Kilmainham Prison, en route for Frongoch.

As the summer advanced we were visited by reviewing generals, sure sign of an impending move to a more unhealthy station. I had now become inured to the delays and fussiness of these occasions, but the general who kept us waiting for him, standing four hours in full equipment on the barrack square, was agreed by all to have touched the limit!

In the first days of July my application for a Commission, first attempted in the December before, at last matured, and I was posted to the 7th Officers' Cadet Battalion at the Curragh, where I joined D Company.

Shortly after the 10th left Dublin for France and found themselves figuring as storm troops of the Naval Division. Their first big action was Beaumont Hamel, where they well upheld the regimental traditions, and where I lost several of my friends. Their subsequent career in France with the Naval Division, and later with the 16th Irish Division, led them into many hot spots, and was in all respects worthy of this beginning.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CADET CORPS AT THE CURRAGH AND FERMOY.

MY new situation as a budding officer proved pleasant enough, the Cadet School being a mixture of college and camp. The Curragh in a warm July was a very different place to the wintry desert I had first found it in January, 1915. The training was light and sufficiently varied with lectures and book work, though it seemed almost *infra dig* to be put to the rudiments of squad drill again. The quarters were good, and the feeding was much superior to anything it had yet been my fortune to encounter in the army. We had a fair amount of time at our own disposal, and week-end passes to Dublin were easily obtained. Our instructors were mainly officers on light duty recovering from wounds.

The commanding officer, Colonel S— M—, was a small benevolent gentleman who bore sway with a gentle hand, and delivered lectures from time to time on subjects of gentlemanly deportment and the like, of a somewhat somnolent nature. As he strutted up and down the platform emphasising his points with

proddings of his cane on the floor, it was not uncommon for him to pause and point it in an accusing manner at one of his audience, saying, "That cadet is asleep." The imputation was generally justified.

The instruction imparted by most of our tutors was not very enlightening, but the musketry captain, full of dry humour, was worth listening to, and Lieutenant Broadhurst, ex-Sergeant-Major of the Regular Army, was a host in himself on the parade ground. He opened the session with an address to the company on parade, informing us that he was a Yorkshireman, and of divers other personal peculiarities of his, and pointing out in pungent style what he expected from us. In fact he gave somewhat the impression of a boastful windbag. On further acquaintance all unfavourable impressions were swallowed up in genuine respect and admiration. He was a soldier all through. He knew his drill from A to Z and could impart his knowledge—not an invariable trait of teachers. He had the best voice of command I ever heard, clear as a bell, and audible at a great distance; strict as a Wellington on parade, he was a thorough good sort off it. Under his auspices the cadet who left without a decent knowledge of Platoon, Company and Battalion drill had only his own deficiency to thank. He was then suffering from a wound in the back, and later returned to France, as I heard, and there met his death.

The battalion was composed of cadets from various branches of the service, and from officers' training corps such as the Inns of Court. A large

proportion of the men had seen service but a number had yet to taste its joys. One of the latter, a Canadian, made himself remarkable by his decided views on how the war should be run in all its details. He was holding forth in his usual style one night in the hut when his eloquence was curtailed by a Dublin Fusilier back from Gallipoli and Servia, who good humouredly asked him if he had ever been under fire!

We had put in a pleasant month on the Curragh, and I had just got my wife installed in Kildare, not far from the camp, when the battalion moved to Moore Park, Fermoy, on August 10th.

This splendid demesne just outside the village of Kilworth, was an ideal spot for training, and the hutments were even better than those we had left. The place was surrounded by delightful country, and the small but busy town of Fermoy was only a few miles away. This distance could be traversed either on foot or by one of Noble's taxis, a collection of ramshackle "tin Lizzies" driven for hire by a set of Southern Irish desperadoes with little regard for their lives or those of their passengers.

One of these contraptions, leaving the camp one night with a full load of lady passengers from a dance, drove full tilt, despite the warning cries of the sentry, into a gate which had been closed by special order, and deposited itself and its load in the ditch.

One famous Sunday night has fixed itself in my memory. My wife and I, with another cadet,

alighted at midnight in Fermoy from the Cork train. The rain was coming down in torrents. There was one taxi outside ordered by us, but already full of cadets in a cheerful frame of mind. A voice from within declared that they would get out for no one on God's earth! Then they heard there was a lady outside and out they all tumbled, and proved to our surprise and amusement to be all friends of our own from the 7th Dublins. By judicious cramming seven or eight of us packed in, as well as the driver, and set off with creakings and groanings outside the station. Here the protesting bus finally stuck, and we had to sit in it by the side of the road till another of the same should return from camp. At length our driver hailed one and we transhipped and set off again. Our new conveyance had little or no light. The glass screen was obscured by the driving rain and the night was pitch dark. In spite of all, our man drove like Jehu son of Nimshi, and about half way home banged full tilt into the back of an outside-car preceeding him on its proper side of the road. The horse was almost thrown over the wall beside the road, the shafts were broken, and four cadets, passengers, and the driver were all spilled on the thoroughfare highway. By some miracle we came to a standstill right side up. On investigation it appeared that one of our victims was knocked unconscious.

A taxi opportunely turned up with a party bound for camp, and into it our friends humped the unconscious cadet, and persuaded the reluctant travellers to convey him to Fermoy Hospital on the

grounds that we had a lady with us and could not take him in.

This affair being satisfactorily concluded, we proceeded on our way in a very lopsided fashion, but reached Kilworth without further mishap, in the small hours of the morning, and frozen to the bone.

Immediately on my arrival in Moore Park I set about a hunt for digs, with a view to enjoying as much domestic life as possible amid war's alarms. By good fortune I recognised an old acquaintance in the curate of the place, and with his aid secured a very comfortable sitting-room and bedroom in a carpenter's house on the main, and only, street of Kilworth, just outside Moore Park wall. Here I installed my wife, and having secured a "sleeping out pass," was able to spend my time from 4 p.m. daily till the next morning's parade, unless that *bête noir* of training, "night work," appeared on the bill of fare.

Life thus slipped by very pleasantly through August, September and October, varied by boating and bathing in the Blackwater, cycling through the beautiful scenery of Cork county, and a week-end or two in Cork city.

In the middle of October our final examination came round, partly book work and partly work on the parade ground. Lieutenant Broadhurst had charge of the latter, and put us through our facings in platoon drill.

A week before we left a change came over the battalion. Our little gentleman Colonel S— M— was replaced by a stark disciplinarian, lamed and

shattered in the war, and apparently embittered also in spirit. He lost no time in tightening up the strings. Among his first orders was one that all sleeping-out passes were to be cancelled. Consternation reigned among the married cadets. We pointed out to our company commander that we had wives abandoned outside the walls of Moore Park, and if this order stood could not rejoin them. Then we waited in a body on the adjutant, who assuaged our troubled spirits by assuring us that there had been a mistake, that there was no intention to deprive men who had passes already, but that no more would be issued.

So our last few days were spent in peace, and we departed towards the end of October, thanking the saints that our term had come to an end before worse things befell us. Those we left behind had a much more strenuous time than fell to our lot, and held themselves lucky at the end if they were not turned down for some distaste in the mind of the new colonel to the cut of their jib. He carried matters so far, indeed, that he was requested, I understand, from higher quarters to moderate his destructive zeal, and was remonstrated with in a more energetic and southern Irish fashion by some of the local civilians, who threw a bomb at him one day as he was out on his horse.

This little ebullition of popular feeling may have been due in part to the discovery of a considerable leakage of government property from the camp. A search was instituted by the police in Kilworth village, and some hundreds of pounds worth of stuff

unearthed in the houses of the inhabitants. The Government has always been considered fair game in Ireland, but this was pushing the doctrine a thought too far.

Having successfully cleared the last fences, I returned to Dublin, with a few weeks' leave in which to enjoy my new made dignity of an officer of His Majesty's army, and to enrich the tailor with the fifty pounds provided for my kit. Had I been as wise as I was a few months later I would have saved part of this sum by waiting to get most of my kit from the Ordnance in France, but as it was I finished with the Dublin outfitters something on the wrong side of the fifty pounds.

Having been gazetted to the 11th Reserve Battalion of the Dublin Fusiliers, I joined them in Wellington Barracks in November, and took my place in the officers' mess which I had humbly guarded as a private during the Rebellion.

In this battalion there were collected a number of officers and men waiting to be drafted to France. As there was so large a proportion of the former the duties were light, and fortified again with leave to sleep out of barracks, I spent most of my time at home or displaying the magnificence of my new uniform and Sam Browne belt in Grafton Street.

While in barracks, the only work one had was to hang around watching bomb throwing instruction or drill or "physical jerks." One of the bombing instructors had had a remarkable escape in one of the early gas attacks, where the 8th Dublins were nearly wiped out. When the gas came over he put

on his mask and began to fire steadily across the parapet. The barrage became very heavy and most of the men in his trench were killed. He tried to move along the trench, when a shell blew out part of the parapet near him and buried him under a sandbag or two. Here he lay while the German bombers came over, and having first bombed the trench took possession of it, and here he was found when the counter attack drove them out again. He was taken up blackened and almost dead from gas poisoning, but, strange to say, recovered, though the effects remained to some extent in a pair of badly damaged lungs.

Towards the end of the year I found myself in orders for a gas course at Island Bridge, one of the final preliminaries to a visit to the pleasant land of France. We were lectured on the chemistry of the new atrocity and the best means to combat it, and taught to handle the gas masks then in vogue. We were then put through the gas chamber, in which we had first to stay a few minutes with masks on, and then to go in and change masks in the gas. These manoeuvres were completed successfully, and we were passed out as graduates on the subject of gas, after a short examination.

In the middle of January, 1917, I, with several other officers, was ordered to report at Southampton en route for France. I crossed with my wife, did a theatre or two in London, and having said "Good-bye" at Victoria Station, duly presented myself with my companions to the R.T.O. in Southampton. This official had no information with regard to us, and

consequently we had the 16th and 17th January to put in in the Dolphin Hotel, Southampton, before it transpired that we had been sent there in error, our real port of departure being Folkestone.

Our amended orders having come through, we betook ourselves back to London and thence to Folkestone, which was in black darkness, and where we embarked on 19th January. The voyage across the Channel was exhilarating. The steamer packed with officers of every grade, the life-buoys served out to all hands as a grim reminder of what we might expect, the escort of torpedo boats circling round us, and the furious pace at which we hurried over the choppy sea, were all entertaining to the novice.

CHAPTER XIV.

ARRIVAL IN FRANCE.

THE landing on foreign soil, to wit the dingy wharf of Calais, with the knowledge that one was now definitely involved in, and about to view at close quarters, the working of the great war machine in France, was most intriguing.

My friends and I had our luggage conveyed to the station by an old porter, who informed me, so far as I could comprehend his French, that he was over sixty and had nine sons in the army, of whom one had lost his leg and another his life. I commended his record in the words "Très Bon."

In the officers' canteen we had a bowl of tea and as much as we could eat for a shilling, and waited in comfort for our train, which was to land us at the 16th Infantry Base Dépôt, Étaples. Our 1.30 train turned up about six, and proved to be so full that a number of us betook ourselves to a waggon adorned with the inscription "Hommes 40 Chevaux 8," a sum in proportion which sometimes occasioned satirical comment in military circles. Here we had the advantage, denied to those in more classy compartments, of being able to stretch ourselves on the floor and go to sleep. By eleven o'clock our leisurely

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pace brought us to Étaples, where we turned out in the dark, and after some searching found our dépôt, had some supper, and slept that night on the ante-room floor.

On Saturday, January 20th, we had a chance to realise what a huge place the Étaples Dépôt was, and to observe all the different brands of soldiers there. A couple of trips into the town for feeding purposes helped to fill up the day, and at night I had the opportunity to test the virtue of my fleabag, being assigned a bell tent as a sleeping apartment, with the ground frozen hard and a bitter frost still prevailing.

I found myself down in orders first on Sunday for R.C. church parade at 7 a.m. This was improved later into the rifle range at 9.30. Here we waited our turn for three hours, then fired ten rounds each, and so home, with the rest of the day at our own disposal, except that we could not move far from the anteroom of our mess.

The unpleasant predictions of some pessimists of a prolonged stay here with strenuous days in the "bull-ring," as the dépôt training ground was known among its victims, were not fulfilled in our case. On the same evening orders came through for four of us to join the 8th Dublins, and next morning we arose at 5, reported at the station at 7.20, and eventually got under way in the leisurely fashion of French war-time trains, at 11. This time six of us travelled in a first-class carriage. By dint of perseverance our conveyance reached its destination about 10.30 p.m., and having supped in an officers'

rest camp of the Church Army, we lay down and slept on the floor thereof to the sound of the distant artillery. Next morning, after a good breakfast, we set out, and in the afternoon found ourselves installed in the convent at Locre, where our battalion was then spending eight days' "rest" out of the line opposite Wytschaete.

CHAPTER XV.

LOCRE AND BAILLEUL.

THE little Belgium village of Locre, which disappeared from the map in the course of the 1918 offensive, then lay just across the border and some three or four miles behind our line. It was a good billet in the beginning of 1917, being free from shelling. Outside it was a goodly array of army huts, where the men on rest resided, and the Convent, where the officers of a couple of battalions messed well on very reasonable terms, tended by J— and X—, two kindly Belgian maidens, whose knowledge of the movements of the local British battalions was unequalled by any common officer of the line. The hall with its glass roof, long tables, its pious aphorisms hung on the walls, "To work is to pray," and so forth, its piano at one end, and, most important of all, its iron stove standing in the middle, was a home from home. Here we breakfasted, lunched, teaed, and dined, toasted muffins on the lid of the stove, read, wrote, and talked in our off hours, and generally had a sing-song in the evening.

The Convent was really an orphanage and the youngsters were still kept there during 1917. The Mother Superior was a very superior lady indeed.

Some good tales were told of her. An R.E. came along to fix the electric light, made a botch of it, and was shown his job by the Mother Superior. At a later date the Boche threw over some shells which fell just outside the convent walls. During the performance, which lasted some time, the Mother Superior stood at an upstairs window calmly looking on. A captain of the Rifles expressed his surprise that she did not take "cover," to one of the Nuns. "Ah, well," replied the latter, "she has not many excitements in her life!"

The resources of this beneficent establishment even extended to hot baths in the basement, a very present help to gentlemen just arrived from the trenches. The sister in charge dished out a few buckets of hot water strongly coloured with the red mud through which it came. With these the officers retired behind a partition, filled one of several baths in a row, and got a surprisingly good clean down in spite of the colour of the cleansing fluid.

Locre itself did not provide much in the way of entertainment. An officers' club, to wit, a small hut with a few papers and numerous drinks in it, a picture house, one or two shops, and a military barbers, about represents the extent of its resources. In the last a curious incident occurred in the spring of this year. Two officers were there, one waiting and one having his hair cut by the private who officiated as barber, when a stray shell fell just outside the window, through which a piece came and took the barber's head off. Some days later I met

the two officers who had had a few days in hospital to recover from shell shock. The one who was being barbered said he put his hand up, and finding his head covered with blood and brains, concluded they were his own, a fact which he found difficult to reconcile with his being able to stagger out from the hut.

Loere, however, was not our only resource while on rest. A few miles back just over the French border lay Bailleul, known to the 16th Division as "Ballyhooly," and it was possible to manage a visit or two to it without difficulty. Here were some passable shops, a British Ordnance stores, a few hotels and restaurants, a Pierrot show supplied by Army troops, and a most excellent officers' club, not to mention the fair Tina, who lives enshrined in the pages of "The First Hundred Thousand."

When unhappy Bailleul became involved a year later between the contending parties, and its pleasant places were reduced to a heap of shattered bricks, many a British officer, as he heard the sad tale, thought with a sigh of cheerful evenings passed in the Canon d'Or or Madame Salome's, with good fellows whose brief course had since been finished.

The hotels closed down at a respectable hour and it was then a pleasant walk along the frosty road past dumps, cottages, country houses, and the customs hut on the Belgian frontier, to our billets in Loere. There was a tale told of a North of Ireland officer who had come in one evening from Kemmel Huts, some five miles from Bailleul, with a friend.

As they left Madame Salome's at night his friend was bemoaning the long tramp before them. "Wait a minute," said the Irishman, and coolly walking up to one of the long line of "Staff" and other motor cars standing along the street, he "up-ended" the chauffeur, jumped in with his friend, and drove off. The car was left on the roadside, and the two retired to rest with the sense of "something accomplished someone done." In spite of a considerable hubbub the perpetrators of this "atrocitiy" were never discovered.

My first experience of France was frosty in the extreme. The ice was half a foot thick, fields and roads were iron bound. A breeze which blew over the snowy flats round Locre served to rub the fact of a hard winter into the dullest apprehension. When we left the warm quarters of the Convent hall, and retired to the wooden hut which four of us used as our sleeping apartment, we found that even with the help of a stove the problem of keeping warm in our "fleabags" was not an easy one to solve; while rising in the bitter morning, shaving and dressing with fingers almost too numb to button our clothes, was an ordeal which made the hot coffee and boiled eggs of breakfast doubly agreeable.

Our morning duty as a rule consisted in marching with our company to a frozen field a short distance off, where we watched the unfortunate Tommy going through his wiring, drill, physical jerks, bayonet exercises, or other manoeuvres calculated to limber his joints and improve his wind after the cramping effects of the turn in the trenches. The importance

attached to cleaning up and polishing, as soon as the men reached rest billets, appeared at first excessive and rather hard lines. It was later that one realised that, like many other things in the army, which did not recommend themselves at first sight, this too had its uses, and was, in fact, invaluable in preserving discipline, self-respect and smartness.

An interesting sight to my unaccustomed eyes on these first days, was the arrival of a Boche aeroplane flying very high overhead and our gunners trying to demolish him. The little white clouds, appearing as the "Archies" burst round him, showed up very prettily against the frosty blue sky. They served, I presume, to keep him high, but as to hitting him, that seemed rather a pious hope than an active expectation. I was to become acquainted later on with the unpleasant feeling of standing listening to the approaching whistle of a dud Archie seeking earth again, somewhere in the neighbourhood, and speculating whether or no it was coming on my devoted head.

With the morning exercises one's duty for the day was sometimes finished, and the afternoon was free to jump on a lorry or foot it into Bailleul, or to read and write in the comfortable warmth of the Convent.

CHAPTER XVI.

OFFICERS OF THE 8th DUBLINS.

IN becoming an officer of the 8th (Service) Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers (known as the "Shining Eighth," on account of its cleaning and polishing achievements), I found I had indeed fallen on my feet. The officers were all good fellows, and as we were not entered for any costly "stunts" before August (Messines push treating us very lightly) our happy family was not much changed during my first spell of seven months in France. One of the first acquaintances I encountered was a red-headed young second lieutenant called Hamlet, who reminded me that I had taught him in Sunday School, whereupon a brother officer urged me not to take to myself too much credit, as the results did not justify it. Here, too, I found Anderson, Corporal of the barrack guardroom at Naas, and Harry Poulter, both from the old D Company.

I was posted to C Company and introduced to its skipper, Captain Frank Thompson, six feet long, proportionately broad, as full of good spirits as a school boy, and the very best of good company. He had a wonderful way of keeping his company up to

the mark, strafing all round and yet leaving everyone in good humour, and himself in high favour. Off parade no one could ask for a better companion, and with Poulter, and Flynn from Spanish Honduras and Johnny Johnston, small, stout and cheerful, from Co. Down, as the other platoon commanders, we had a most harmonious company mess, where quips and cranks and wanton wiles helped to pass away many a dull hour and some dangerous ones.

Captain Thompson and his elder brother, Major Thompson, who became Colonel of the Battalion soon after my arrival, on the departure of Colonel Bellingham to become a Brigadier, both hailed from Nicaragua. The Major was even a bigger man than my skipper, quiet, sarcastic, with an eye that seemed to penetrate one's vitals, a splendid seat on a horse, and an equally secure one at the head of his battalion. With ample powers of making himself unpleasant to shirkers and ill doers, he was the decentest and fairest of men to officer and man whom he conceived to be honestly endeavouring to do his duty. In the line he had a disagreeable habit of wandering along to some point where the parapet was deficient and snipers active, and standing there with half his long body exposed, keeping some unhappy lieutenant dancing unwilling attendance, while he pointed out where he wanted wiring done or the defences otherwise improved.

A Company was under the command of the mild and spectacled Captain Synnott, and beside Anderson and a large and intrepid man called Doherty, who fell at Frezenburg, was blessed in the possession of

Lieutenant K—, alias “Baron Ginchy,” a Yorkshire Irishman full of eloquence and song. In the Convent he was a host in himself, being equal when the humour took him to sing in his fine baritone half the night. He happened to join the 8th on the day of Guinchy on the Somme, when the 16th Division won its fairest laurels, and so had his first taste of service in the middle of hell upon earth. The impression made on him by this experience produced such a considerable flow of reminiscence afterwards that he was generally known as “Baron Ginchy.” He had a considerable facility of making himself as comfortable as active service permitted. His colleague Anderson was much amused one frosty night on coming into the dugout after his tour of the front line, to find Baron Ginchy wrapped in blankets, sitting at the table with his feet up, a cigar in his mouth and a glass of rum at his elbow, while a brazier of hot charcoal burned at his side, and to hear his remark, “I declare to God, Anderson, if our folk at home could see what we have to go through out here, it would break their hearts.”

Captain C of C Company was an Englishman with certain peculiarities which did not altogether endear him to his subordinates. He cursed his men with great force and variety of language, and he was known to wear a bullet proof waistcoat, which caused him to be addressed one time by a private, who had had undue access to the rum jar, as a “tin chested so and so.” He had not got the way with men for which my skipper was so remarkable. He was a most widely read and interesting man to talk to, and was

able to shave with an ordinary razor while walking about conversing or holding company office. He was a good soldier too, as I have good reason to know, having seen his conduct in the field on one of the dark days of March, 1918, my last day of warfare, and his last also.

"Tim" Healy, a Southern Irishman, skippered D Company, and before the war ended rose to the dignity of Colonel of a Rifle Battalion. Among his subalterns he numbered the small but spruce Conarchy, whose toilet, when he turned out in his glad rags with a different shade of khaki in tie, tunic, breeches, and puttees, was a delight to behold. It was related of him that, returning one night in the small hours from a Trench Mortar mess, where he had been unusually lucky at cards, with a cigar in his mouth and full of good liquor, he was challenged by the sentry, "Halt! Who goes there?" whereupon he took the cigar from his mouth, and said, "Rothschild," and passed on.

The 8th had a jewel of a quartermaster in Jock Campbell, an old Scotchman, who never failed to arrive with the rum intact, no matter where the battalion was nor how shell strewn the way might be. He served with the battalion right through till the spring of '18, when he was given a job at the base which he accepted with much reluctance.

Two new recruits arrived one night at Campbell's quarters, an Irishman and a Scotchman. Jock stuck out his head and enquired who they were and what they wanted. Having heard the Scotch accent he directed its owner to the sergeant, who would find

him his quarters, and invited the Irishman in to have a drink!

We had as second in command for a short time Major Hunt, whom repute marked out as the best soldier in the Division. A drill instructor in a Dublin school before the war, he finished it a Brigadier-General, and no man ever deserved his success better or was less spoiled by it.

No account, however fragmentary, of the 8th would be complete without remembering our R.C. Padre, Father Doyle, a Dublin Jesuit. His name was known and loved through the whole Division for unexampled bravery and equal kindliness. He wore the Military Cross gained on the Somme, and was recommended for the V.C. for his extraordinary courage in the deadly area of Frezenburg in the Paschendaele offensive of August, 1917, where he met his death. When shells dropped round ordinary mortals took cover or an opposite direction. Father Doyle made for them to see was he wanted. One morning in the line I was standing watching the communication trench a short way down getting a very nasty shelling. In a few minutes Father Doyle arrived smiling, having just come through it on his usual visit to the front line, without his tin hat, which he could not be induced to wear. In fact it was with great difficulty that he was got even to carry a gas helmet. His gentlemanly, reserved manner with his quiet humour and pleasant conversation, which often contained some canard such as that the French were going to give in next month, all made him a very pleasant man to meet at any

time, and most of all in a bad time. Is it any wonder that he was welcome in every mess, that the men worshipped the ground he trod on, and that he was worth several officers in any hot spot where endurance was tested to its height?

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE FRONT LINE TRENCHES.

AS the end of our week at Locre approached everything inspectable was inspected, gas helmets in particular, and the night before our tour in the trenches was to commence we had a gala dinner and sing-song in the mess, as a pleasant wind-up.

Next evening we set out for the front line, timing it so as to arrive at the danger zone about dusk. I had the honour of marching beside Captain Thompson, with the platoon behind and a piper playing Irish airs on an Irish bagpipes just under our noses. The intention doubtless was kindly, but we both heaved a sigh of relief when he abandoned his tune-ful labours a little way out and permitted us to proceed in peace. We passed some genuine and some dummy houses by the wayside; the latter looked innocent enough until we came abreast of them and saw the muzzle of a big gun sticking out. Then we topped a rise, and on the slope towards the enemy, marched under a series of screens hung from side to side of the road so as to break the view from the other side.

Kemmel Chateau appeared on the left of the road

as we got further on, a country seat which must have been very pretty in happier days, with its ornamental pond round it. Now a large chunk had gone from the doorway, and its appearance had deteriorated in other respects, but in spite of all it had escaped remarkably when its conspicuous and exposed condition so near the line is considered. The field on the opposite side of the road was pitted with large shell holes which led me to conjecture that there might be a mistake of fifty to a hundred yards in some German artillery man's calculations.

A little past the chateau we turned sharply to the left of the road, and proceeded on a duckboard track through a small wood. The road itself ran straight on into the German lines, and east of the wood "York Road" ran out of it to the left. Having left the wood we followed York Road, which brought us to the beginning of the communication trench. This was a genuine trench, well dug, and revetted most of the way. Following its meanderings in careful silence, lest anything should give away the fact that we were taking over trenches to the "Alleyman" (Tommy French for Allemand), and bring down his shell fire on us, we at length found ourselves in the front line, having walked a good way but not covered a great distance as the crow flies.

The front line trenches were not what we had been taught to expect in the text books and lectures of the Cadet Battalion. They had traverses and fire-bays all right, but, in place of being six or seven good feet underground, they were mainly a breast-work towards the enemy, of sandbags with a parados

of a rather so so kind marked by gaps here and there. There were spots where the breastwork itself was on the low side, and it was necessary to proceed in a humble and undignified stoop to avoid the attentions of snipers. On our left in particular there was a gap between ourselves and the next battalion only held by a bombing post. With the hard frost, however, the trenches were pleasantly dry, and owing to the protection from the wind, warmer than the open country.

When we had filed in in the dark and got the men in their places along the line, each lot behind the men they were to relieve, the latter moved off and left us to stand for the next few days in the forefront of the battle, so to speak. Each sentry was standing on the firestep peering out into the darkness suddenly illuminated from time to time by star shells, and each Lewis gun was in position ready to poop off at nothing at intervals all night. Then we had leisure to return to the Company dugout a short way down the communication trench and put away a hearty supper.

I had opportunity to become acquainted with the routine of trench life, and with some of the N.C.O.s of my new battalion. Foremost among the last was Tait, our Company Sergeant-Major, small, stout, active, and a natural born soldier. A cooper in Guinness's before the war, he had come out with the 16th Division, and had made such good use of his time that he had become the most expert of men-at-arms. The Lewis Gun was his speciality, but he had little to learn of any of the hundred and one things which a company sergeant-major should know. Always

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fertile in expedients, and full of energy and the capacity for getting things done, he was simply invaluable to our Captain in keeping the Company in first-class trim. He even discovered that a certain species of French mud gave the web equipment quite a good finish, and earned thereby, while at rest the economies of the Skipper, and, I doubt not, the hearty curses of the men. He was as good a soldier in action as out of it, and withal pleasant, unassuming, and simple, and richly deserved the D.C.M. and M.M. which came his way.

Of all the sergeants the one who bore the classiest name of Delahoyde has left the pleasantest memories. A big, heavy type of man, he concealed under a hard exterior a heart of gold, and the most simple, kindly courtesy. He was a venerable looking old chap, and I could never abuse him for anything, it felt so like abusing one's father. Anyway, he never needed it, for he was most reliable. The hardest march saw him come in as fit as the youngest, and the roughest shelling could not ruffle his large serenity. Though it was his fate to finish the war as a prisoner in Germany, what time he ate strange food such as stewed thistles gathered by himself and his fellow victims, he turned up when peace came, apparently the same as ever.

I found that night was the strenuous time in the trenches, and that my particular job consisted in taking my turn as officer in charge in the front line, two hours on and four hours off. The two hours on were spent in stumbling along the inequalities of our duckboards from one end of our section to the other,

with my revolver handy in the pouch and my servant with his rifle behind, and visiting in turn all the sentries and Lewis gun posts to pass them the time of night, and enquire as to whether they saw anything outside. There was about time to do this twice in the two hours, progress being slow even though the Boche kindly lit up the way with his frequent Vercy lights. A machine-gun over the way would occasionally put the heart crossways in me with a sudden "burst," which sounded extraordinarily near and close, and whose bullets skimmed the parapet just over my head.

When my two hours were over I pulled aside the blanket of the signaller's dugout in the parapet, where he sat all night by the light of a candle at the field telephone, crawled over the sleeping Tommies who carpeted the floor, and rolled myself up in a blanket in the corner where, despite the rattle of machine-guns and the plop of bullets against the parapet, I slept the sleep of the just. It seemed only ten minutes when I was roused again for another tour in the dark and cold, and the last sleep was generally abridged by "Stand to," when the whole Company stood to arms in the trench from an hour before sunrise till it was quite light. Then the pleasantest function of the day—the distribution of the rum ration—took place. Attended by the Company Sergeant-Major, the officer proceeded along the trench with the rum jar, filling out a small dose in the measure and handing it to each man in turn, occasionally putting in an extra drop for the older hands, whose wellseasoned throats required an extra

warming. The potent fluid spread a general air of joviality over the scene. To men who had stood the biting frost, or, worse still, the rain and mud of a winter's night in the trenches, it was a godsend.

This ceremony over we left the Company Sergeant-Major in charge, and betook ourselves to the company dugout to enjoy what we considered a well earned breakfast of porridge and golden syrup or Ideal milk, bacon and eggs, etc. The men's breakfasts came up also, the wonderful organisation of the British Commissariat providing hot bacon for them, and hot tea carried in a tank strapped to the Orderly's back, with hot coals in the bottom to keep up the heat. Having finished breakfast and a cigarette and performed the meagre toilet possible, the officer whose first turn it was went along the line to inspect rifles and equipment, and to see that all was O.K., in case the Colonel should come to pay one of his frequent visits.

One advantage I soon perceived in the front line was the absence of interference of higher functionaries. "Brass hats" did not throng the trenches. One brigadier who came to see us, and was supposed not to love shell fire, had his visit abbreviated by the Sergeant-Major drawing the pin of a Mills bomb and covertly dropping it over the back of the trench. Another old gentleman, however, of the same rank and of benevolent and kindly mien, joined us one day in the support trenches, and having gone the round was with difficulty dissuaded by our Captain from walking over the top in broad daylight down to the front line!

The morning inspection over there was little else to do in the daytime during quiet times. One officer had to be in charge of the Company front, but had little to do but smoke. The others had leisure on their hands, except the Captain, whose pen was generally busy. The quantity of manuscript of all kinds which he had to pass through his hands in the line fairly astonished me. Indents, strength reports, wind reports, etc., etc., etc., seemed to be cropping up all day long.

As dusk fell the watch became once again more alert, working parties were mustered for wiring in No Man's Land or trench repairing, and two hours on duty and four hours off for the 2nd Lieutenant dragged through another night, till the blessed sun arose again.

One of my colleagues was to go on leave during this tour, and confided to me that he felt as nervous as a cat for fear something should hit him before he got safely away, though if he had only been going to do the full spell in the ordinary course, he would have thought nothing of it. Perhaps the tale of an officer of the Division was weighing on his mind. This officer got his pass to go on leave in the front line, was twice buried by shells on the way down, and killed by a chance one at the rail-head. My friend met with no such mis-chance, but departed rejoicing.

One of the pleasant, sunny, and frosty mornings was diversified unpleasantly by a German trench mortar, which started throwing shells over in our direction, and kept it up an unreasonably long time. Fortunately for me, the N.C.O.s I was with were old

hands at the game, and quick to hear the soft "phut" which told that one was coming, and to spot it as it reached the highest point of its flight. A sharp eye could tell then the direction of descent, and thus diagnose the correct traverse to dodge round so as to put some feet of solid earth between the burst and its intended victims. It was an interesting and exciting game, no one was hurt, and it appeared to afford much amusement to the old soldiers. For my part I was well pleased when full time was called. The shells seemed to me as they turned over in mid air to be nosing us out in a deliberate and malignant manner, and one which fell just behind us left my ears singing for hours.

I could fully enter into the feelings of the Tommy who, on a trip over the top, entered a German trench and was met by a Boche with his hands up, who said, "Me no fighting man, me Minninwerfer man."

"Ah," said old Bill, "you are the bleeding man I am looking for," and put his bayonet through him. He had been playing the same game as occupied us that morning and did not like it.

Though our tours in the line at Wytschaete were very peaceable in the early months of '17, they were not carried through entirely without loss. One unfortunate fellow was shot through the head by a sniper's bullet when just going in at a corner of the trench where one would have imagined he was quite safe. The marks of his blood remained on the waterproof sheet, hung at the door of a dugout there, as a grim reminder of the reality of the game we were playing.

Another was shot through the abdomen while out wiring at night, and a third had a machine-gun bullet clean through his head and both sides of his tin hat while on a listening post outside the trench. He belonged to my platoon, and the task of writing to his wife in Dublin consequently fell to me. I said to console her that he died a soldier's death. A year later when I had just rejoined after five months at home, a letter arrived from a Dublin priest with enquiries as to whether the man was really dead. The widow was about to be married again and he wanted to make sure that there would be no resurrection of No. 1. I was able to make his mind easy.

An extra interest was added one night by a small raid planned and carried out by my friend Poulter, and Marlow of D Company.

On the extreme right of our Company front the German trenches and ours approached to within thirty yards of each other. It was believed that a single German sentry was stationed at this spot, and the design was to approach him from two sides and ravish him away before his friends could come to his aid. Accordingly, on a dark but clear night the two lieutenants, each followed by a sergeant and a squad of men, slipped over the parapet and left us in the trench straining our eyes in the direction of the sentry post. For a good while there was nothing but the usual Verey lights and occasional bursts of fire, which formed the usual nightly programme. Then bombs began to go off and rifles to crack in one corner. Then another wait and our men came back over the parapet, the officers last, all safe, but

without their prisoner. They had got to the spot all right, but instead of a solitary sentry found the trench packed with German soldiers. Poulter plunged through the wire and got on the parapet followed by the Sergeant, but their fingers were too cold to get the pin out of the Mills bomb, and they had to retire behind a shower of bombs, escaping almost by a miracle. Marlow had the same experience on the other side, and came away after potting at a German gentleman at close quarters with his revolver.

We stood by then for artillery retaliation, but this fell for half an hour or so, while we looked on, on the Royal Irish Rifles on our right, the Boche apparently believing it was they who had been trying to leave cards on him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“SANDBAG VILLA,” KEMMEL, AND “STRONG POINT 13.”

HAVING passed our four days in the front line we were relieved on the night of the 4th, and filed off down the communication trench to our position in reserve in a location known as “Sandbag Villa.” I had come down with Company Sergeant-Major Tait in the afternoon, after finishing my game of tig with the Minninwerfer, to “take over”—a process which consisted on my part in looking on while Tait did the work. One important point I did not neglect, which was to proceed to the Y.M.C.A. canteen in the cellar of a shell ruined house near the exit of the communication trench, where divers articles were vended, including a nondescript coffee made from shell hole water. Here I purchased candles, tinned fruit, golden syrup, buns, biscuits, Ideal milk, and café-au-lait for our Company mess of four.

“Sandbag Villa,” justly so called, consisted of a hut or two, constructed of sandbags, and the remains of an old farm where the men were lodged alongside “York Road,” which ran behind the trenches. As we were in reserve we had no touring of trenches

or perpetual watchfulness to keep up, and at the same time we were free from parades except the inspection of rifles, etc., so that it was a "cushy" time. One job I had was escorting the rum ration up to the front line during the darkness.

The place at night was simply alive with rats, and they were a fine size also. I saw two dead ones in the farmyard the size of a small terrier. Sometimes the men amused themselves by baiting the ends of their rifles with pieces of bacon in order to have a shot at them at close quarters. They skipped about like kittens over the feet of anyone who left the dugout after dark, and even made free with the dugout itself.

Our Captain, energetic and hopeful as always, determined to make it rat-proof, and spent the whole of one morning having wire netting nailed over every loophole by which they could enter. It was an arduous job, and one corporal nearly lost his stripes over it, but eventually all was satisfactorily finished, and the Captain sat down to a game of bridge in the afternoon with an air of "something accomplished something done." The game was under way a short time when Poulter found a rat sitting beside him on the bench! Captain Thompson, averred he had brought it in his pocket, an allegation to which Poulter's love for practical jokes gave some colour, but I think on the whole the rat came in on his own to show up the preventive measures.

It fell to my lot to sleep by myself in a farmhouse across a field or two, where some civilians still remained. This house, though close up to the line and

in a conspicuous position, had remained intact, which was supposed to be a return for services rendered to the “Alleyman.” It was stated, at any rate, that one or two of the men of the family had been shot by the British as spies. Here each night of our four days’ stay in Sandbag Villa, in a large room where my batman had lit a good fire, I slept soundly with my loaded revolver beneath my head.

Having completed our residence in Sandbag Villa without incident, we moved again for a sojourn of eight days in Kemmel, the remains of a beautiful holiday resort in pre-war days. Our billet here was the Curé’s house, a large edifice beside the ruined church, with several rooms still intact and a pretty respectable roof on it. There was a large room where we messed in the day, furnished with Spartan simplicity by a table, two benches, and a broken down cupboard. After the first night or so with one consent we brought our beds into it, and so enjoyed the luxury of retiring to rest with the warmth of a fire. We had our valises here and were able to make ourselves extra comfortable and to enjoy it to the full, as there was no reason for early rising.

Even in this dilapidated borough, thanks to the wonderful persistence of the French, there were shops where it was possible to buy eggs, butter, bread, tinned milk, and other articles for the mess.

These days there were only light parades and inspections for the men, and an odd working party. Part of the time was occupied in the construction of some “knife-rests”—an obstruction composed of a heavy beam resting at each end on two cross pieces

and wound round with barbed wire. Our leisure hours were spent in smoking, cards, reading, writing, and sleeping.

For me the time was pleasantly broken by a day off, when Captain Thompson procured me a pass to 9 p.m., lent me his horse to ride to the Transport Lines at Locre, and gave me a note to get the mess cart to take me thence to Bailleul. Accordingly I set off on horseback with an orderly following, and wearing a tin hat, which was not an ideal head dress when the nag trotted. He, recognising an amateur on his back, was not inclined to exert himself until the orderly got down and pulled me a switch from the hedge. Having conceded that point the animal took up a strong attitude about the side of the road he would travel on, and carried his point most of the way by progressing on the wrong one. However, we arrived in state at the Transport Lines, where I swapped my tin hat for my cap at the Convent. Here I met Captain Hipwell, an old schoolfellow, and then medical officer of a local field ambulance, and fixed up to have dinner with him. I then set out on foot (the mess cart having gone) and with the help of a lift on a motor transport waggon, arrived in time to inspect some of the town, since swept out of existence by the tides of war. Having lunched at the officers' club, I repaired to the Field Cashier's to draw my hundred and twenty-five francs, and found I was late. However, by careful management I succeeded in making my purchases and leaving enough for dinner. On my return to the club I had the good luck to meet Jack Gordon,

an old D Company man returning from leave, and borrowed fifty francs from him, and returned to exchange one of my purchases, a bottle of scent for the wife, for a better one. After a good dinner at a French hotel (the Canon d'Or), Hipwell and I started on the return journey at 8 p.m. in the mess cart, and I reported at our billet at 9.30.

Next day my labours consisted of giving a lecture on bombs for half an hour, which period sufficed to exhaust my information on the subject, and at night the conducting of a work party to their job, and handing them over to their taskmaster.

Our leisurely eight days came to an end on February 13th, and we moved up again that night to the front line, thanking Providence that the frost still held. Our four days in the front were spent in uneventful routine, as before, going the rounds by night, inspecting rifles and seeing that the men rubbed their feet with whale oil, by day, and in our spare time smoking, reading, or playing an odd game of cards in the Company dugout. I now took on for the first time the job of Company Mess President, and superintended the purchase by our servants of eggs, “dooly,” and “dewpans” (the last two being Tommy French for “du lait” and “du pain”), and such other luxuries as were procurable in this forward area.

As we happened to be only two Subs in the Company this journey, the night shifts were two hours on and two hours off, an arrangement which reduced one's night's rest to a minimum. In fact I hardly seemed to have turned in to the old dugout when I

was shaken up to turn out for another two hours in the cold and dark, stumbling up and down the uneven duckboards.

It was consequently a pleasant "relief" which landed us after four days in "Strong Point 13," a redoubt of intricate trenches in the second line built round an old farmhouse of which but a wall or two remained.

Here, though near the front line, we were able to leave the night watch to others, and had a larger and freer life. In the centre of this Strong Point you could climb out of the trench, cross a few yards of the open, and descend by a narrow stair to where an Engineer officer lived in the bowels of the earth. It was one of the openings of a huge mine (reputed to hold a million pounds of ammonal), which ran under the Alleyman's line at Wytschaete. It had been constructed over a year before, and was now biding its time to go up with its eighteen brethren along the front on the great morning of the Messines offensive in June, 1917. At the top of the Strong Point was another larger opening, with a broad stair leading down to the same mine, which proved a pleasant city of refuge one morning when the Alleyman suddenly took a freakish notion to sweep the Strong Point across with a line of shell fire. In spite of the unevenness of the ground I made exceedingly good time to the mouth of the cavern.

Behind the Strong Point was a large, sandbagged hut, which was the Battalion Doctor's headquarters, and was also used by us as a company mess. When things began to get hot towards the beginning of the

June offensive, Captain Hipwell, our medical man, thinking this situation too exposed, procured another dugout at a point some way off where several trenches met. There was much pleasure amongst us soon after, when a Boche air map of our trenches captured on a raid, was found to have this new dugout marked down for special attention as a “strong point.”

On the left of S.P 13 as we looked towards the front line, a row of jagged stumps of trees stood up, and midway down them was the hut occupied by the Padre, generally Father Doyle, but during one of our tours another Padre who had been with the Irish Guards. One evening as we were being gently strafed, he came down to the Doctor's hut where we were assembled, and said if we did not mind he would remain with us for a while, as he felt uneasy when alone under shell fire. The same man soon after, when a message came in that a man had been wounded, set off through the shell fire in the dark refusing to take a runner with him as it was too dangerous!

On February 21st our four days' occupation of S.P. 13 came to an end, and I was pushed off in the afternoon to take over the Company's billets in Locre which they were to occupy for the next eight days. Having spent the afternoon seeing that everything was left clean, and that beds and blankets were ready, and tea prepared, I dined at the Convent after their arrival at 8 p.m. A little later I retired to rest in a comfortable hut which I had managed to secure, and which I shared in common with Poulter, John-

son, and Anderson of D Company. I slept the sleep of the just till after nine the next morning.

The return to baths, hair cuts, blankets, tablecloths, and civilised meals again, was a pleasant change from life in dugouts and ruined houses. And there was always the piano in the evenings in the mess hall of the Convent. The morning session in the "bull ring," some twenty minutes walk away, only served to add zest to one's enjoyment of the mess in the evening.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE 16th DIVISIONAL SCHOOL.

MY name appeared in orders for a course at the '16th Divisional School,' on February 24th, and next day I departed with my servant and belongings by motor lorry, and found myself installed in Hut 15, with Marlow of the 8th, the same evening.

The school was situated near a small village called St. Jean Capelle. The officers occupied cubicles which ran round three sides of a square, facing inwards, with a veranda in front, and the most immaculate duckboard tracks everywhere. To throw matches or pieces of paper or other litter anywhere in the precincts was almost a capital offence. The cubicles each contained two bunks, one over the other, and two flap tables against the wall, and a form, and housed two officers each. There was a comfortable mess room. The officers' servants and N.C.O.s and men on the course were lodged in another quarter.

The month's instruction was pretty much a replica of the Officers' Cadet Battalion at home. Any amount of squad and arms drill was provided for us,

the officers being put through it in a squad by themselves. Revolver practice, Lewis gun firing, gas instruction, marching at night by compass, and other like stunts, also took up our time. The lectures were attended by officers, N.C.O.s and men.

One day we were taken to a village nearby, and directed to prepare a scheme for billeting a battalion there. Another day we proceeded to a hillock overlooking a cross-road, and had to devise a plan for defending it with a platoon and machine-gun.

Another day was spent in a sham attack in which an aeroplane was to participate, but failed to turn up on account of bad weather.

On Fridays we had a gala dinner in the mess, followed by a concert, one of which was given by the staff, and others by Pierrot troupes. Saturday was a day for visiting Bailleul, and dining and doing a show there. Sunday we had to ourselves, and usually spent it in the same pleasant burg.

On St. Patrick's Day we did very little work, and most of us set out for town. In the evening I dined at the club with Beatty and Hughes, and walked home between 10 and 11. It was a lovely night. We three were all sober, but some of our other members were farther advanced. A group of them were coming along the road when a sentry said, "Halt! Who goes there?"

"16th Division," they said. "The Division that took Guillemont and Guinchy for the bloody English!" So he let them pass.

The work in the school was easy and the conditions pleasant, for it was devised to combine in-

struction with rest for officers jaded by a course of trench warfare.

We had a visit from one Captain Betts, who contrived to make a lecture on bayonet fighting closely resemble a good music hall turn. It also caused a certain amount of sympathy with the infantryman who enquired, after a discourse of the kind, how a transfer might be effected to the A.S.C.

There were twenty-four officers on the course, and it was pleasant to meet so many men from various regiments of the Division.

A Belfast man named Beatty particularly took my fancy. He was a hardy lad of medium height and strongly built. He had departed to Canada at the age of sixteen to make his way in the world and had had many and divers adventures since. Most of his jobs seemed to have terminated by some misunderstanding with his boss, leading to regrettable physical violence. He had joined the Canadians, and from them got his commission in an Irish regiment.

He informed me that a colonel of his in the Canadians arrived drunk on church parade, and addressed his men as follows: "I say, boys, the Padre here does not think we sing loud enough. For God's sake put your ears back and let it go." When a chorus arrived later he rose in front and said, "Now boys, let her rip."

One night Beatty met his C.O. lying in the mud on Salisbury Plain, where he had fallen off his horse. He helped him to his tent. The C.O. asked his name and then remarked: "By G—, Beatty, I believe your

drunk!" and called the guard. Beatty had disappeared when they arrived.

While patrolling No Man's Land one night, Beatty bumped into a man in the dark and grappled with him, expecting every minute to get a knife or a bullet in the ribs. After swaying to and fro for some time the man muttered, "I hold ye I'll get this bloody — yet." The strong northern accent revealed one of his own men.

My last view of Beatty was obtained one dark night in August, when he crossed our track as we were ploughing through the mud and shells to the front line at Frezenburg. He had lost a working party of which he was in charge, and was profanely scouring the country in search of them.

CHAPTER XX.

FRENCH FARMHOUSE BILLETS.

AFTER a restful month in the cheerful surroundings of the Divisional School, I went back on March 25th, 1917, to my battalion in the Convent at Locre, Marlow and I walking over in an hour in the afternoon. One of the first items of news was a parade in the morning at 6.45 o'clock. It was followed ere long by the more agreeable intimation that the Brigade was to move back for a couple of weeks' "rest," as understood in the Army, in billets. The object, hidden from us at the time, was to practise attack in preparation for the Messines "stunt," which was to come off in June, and for which the multifarious preparations were already under way.

Having packed our baggage with the facility so remarkable in the army, we set off on a three days' tramp, doing seventeen miles the first day, fifteen the next, and ten on the last, and billeting by the way.

At the end of our journey we were comfortably fixed up in divers French farmhouses. This was my first experience of them, and I was struck with their dirty appearance without, and their scrupulous cleanliness within. One lieutenant was of the

opinion that, when a Frenchman wished to erect a farmhouse, he first secured a large and well matured manure heap, and then built round it. The house was on one side and the barns, etc., as a rule, on the other two, which made a much more imposing show than our own at home possessed. The colossal manure pit in the middle was always a source of great interest, and sometimes of amusement, as when one of our sergeants, rashly trying to walk over the hardened crust, went through to his waist. I was also surprised to find that the smallest and poorest looking French cottages could generally be relied on for a good cup of coffee, and a first-class omelette. The number of eggs consumed by the British officer in France must have been colossal.

Our Company got fixed up in a very comfortable farmhouse for our mess, while some of us had beds in adjoining cottages. Captain Thompson, Poulter, Flynn, Hastings and myself made up the mess, Johnston going home on leave, as his father was dangerously ill.

Our farm possessed a very charming little Frenchwoman, named Odette, and aged four, with quite a penchant for the British officer. Her manners even at that early age were perfect. When we met her in the morning and tried our French on her, "Bon jour, Odette, comment ca va?" she would gravely reply, "Trés bien. Et vous, Monsieur?"

The form our "rest" took was field manoeuvres every day till 1 p.m. The afternoons were more or less free. At night we generally sat down to a game of bridge at a franc a hundred, in which Poulter

and I opposed the Australians, Thompson and Hughes. The last was a very fine specimen of Australian Irishman. He held the M.C. for leading a bombing attack, and driving the Boche out of a trench on the Somme, after he had been shot through the neck. Now he had just returned from acting as bombing instructor for six months in Elm Park, Dublin. He died a Captain in 1918 on a patrol which should have been the job of one of his subalterns.

The men were comfortably housed in the barns of various farms. One of my exploits in French conversation was the borrowing of a lantern from a most courteous old Frenchman and his wife, to light one platoon at night. I even succeeded in telling him he could have it back whenever he wanted, and that we took extra precautions against fire!

Great excitement arose one night in our billet when a foal was born. The unlucky animal died immediately, for want, I suppose, of some experienced man to attend its birth. The farms were run almost entirely by women. Our hostess had a husband a prisoner in Germany, and a brother in Salonica, or vice versa. It was impossible to admire too much the manner in which these Frenchwomen managed to carry on and till every foot of their land practically unaided.

On Easter Sunday I had, much against my will, to rise at 7.40, to take a C. of E. church party to service in a barn, where we sat around on bundles of hay and agricultural implements. We breakfasted at 10, and at 11 set off for the rifle range. Having, unluckily, suggested a road, our Skipper put me in

charge of the advanced guard to work it out by map, promising me a hearty cursing if it was a failure. It turned out successful, and he did me the honour to dub the route the "Rue de Laird." The field kitchen went with us, and the men had dinner en route, while we lunched on arriving at the range. I passed my day between scoring at the butts and superintending men firing, and finished by firing very badly myself. We marched back under a beautiful evening sun and got in by eight.

Easter Monday was a slight day and the Captain, Hastings, and I went for a walk, which ended in a visit to a house in the hamlet of La Panne, where we found an old grandmother of eighty, her daughter, a postman's wife, and a boy. Many bottles of champagne were produced, and all sorts of toasts to La Panne and everyone and everything else were drunk. Harris of D Company, who was with us, introduced Thompson as "Un millionaire Espagnol." An old chap who had fought in 1870 dropped in and was treated and solemnly presented by Thompson with a pound of lard, which he had bought for polishing purposes. The veteran declined, however, to be put "on his ear," but all entered very heartily into the fun, the old lady making an attempt to smoke her first cigarette. A heavy snow shower being abated, we set out for our billets, some in a zig-zag fashion, and on the way called in on D Company. There the news of the capture of Vimy Ridge had just arrived, which caused Thompson to waltz around the room with the fat old Frenchman of the house; and so home to dinner.

Our "rest" finished in a shooting competition between the various companies of the Brigade, in which a platoon of our company came out on top, though the other platoon in the final was supposed to have consisted of picked men from the whole battalion, and to have had extra training!

On April 15th we started back again, and on the 17th, having started at 6.30 a.m., and marched till 2 p.m., we got to our destination, a camp near Kemmel.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ARMY GRENADE SCHOOL.

WE were in the reserve line on April 22nd, when I found I was down for a week at the 2nd Army Grenade School at Terdeghem, so, nothing loth, I packed my kit and set out for our Transport Lines, where I changed into my more fashionable outfit, discarded my tin hat for a cap, and mounted with my baggage on an ammunition cart hauled by an Army mule and driven by an ex-Dublin Jarvey. He said he thought he knew my face, and on discussion it appeared that he had seen me when he was at the Dublin Police Courts in answer to a summons. The mule did not like the French cobbles and slithered round a good deal, but in the hands of the Jarvey he was kept on his feet till we reached Bailleul, where I spent the night at the officers' club.

I started next morning at 7.30 a.m., by rail to St. Omer, whence I proceeded by a light railway to the school. Here we were billeted again in farmhouses, and had a very good mess and pleasant anteroom at the school.

The course was highly compressed to get it inside a week, and between lectures and practice we had not much spare time. The first parade was at 7.45, and from that till dinner at 7.30 we were mostly at work.

The weather began to be more springlike, however, and the surroundings were very pleasant. I found

time before we left to visit the little town of Cassel, which stood on a lofty hill rising sheer out of the middle of a great plain. With two or three other Lieutenants I had a very good dinner here one night, and walked home in fine weather, reaching our billets between 11 and 12, having dissuaded one of the party from climbing every telegraph post on the way.

At the end of our week we had a grand night attack by bombing on some trenches dug in the school grounds. This was a most realistic affair, with Verey lights, etc., etc., and bags of sand for bombs, of which the Commandant was very proud. We finished up with a guest dinner and a very good concert, and then had an examination on the morning of the day we left. I managed to secure the degree of G.Q.I. or "Good Qualified Instructor," the second of four grades, and was now supposed to be able to lecture learnedly on ammonal, tri nitro tolnol, and the intestines of all manner of bombs. On April 29th I travelled back (by a London bus!) to my own folk near Kemmel.

We were now stationed in a camp of wooden huts, in glorious hot weather which lasted all May. For the good of the men's health and morale inter-company sports were the order of the day. Needless to say C Company won the day. We were first in the cross country race, and in the shooting our four platoons took the first four places, mine being second, and though D Company beat us at football our aggregate of points put us on top.

The competition in which each platoon had to march six miles in full marching order, with tin hats and all complete, and then fire a certain number of rounds on the rifle range, was unpopular. Perhaps on account of the heat the Tommy regarded the proceedings with much disfavour. One platoon was slogging along, and as they passed some soldiers lying by the roadside one hailed them—"Going to the trenches, mates?"

"Wish we were," replied one grumbler, "These is bleeding sports!"

The officers had a rifle competition which was won by Captain Thompson, and a revolver one which Peacey of Rhodesia carried off. We were put through drill tests also. Though near the line here we suffered no harm, in spite of one stray shell which went right through the roof of a hut, but buried itself in the floor without exploding. Luckily none of the men about was hit.

CHAPTER XXII.

PREPARING FOR THE OFFENSIVE.

ON May 6th we were back in Locre, and working parties formed our chief employ. They were not, on the whole, too unpleasant. At least they had the advantage of preventing any other parades. Half the Company went one day and half the next. We usually started for the line in the late evening, or at night, and did not return until 4, 5 or 6 in the morning. Two Lieutenants went in charge, and when we returned we ate anything that was to be had, and tumbled into bed till mid-day or so. The days off were very "cushy," as there was no duty to be done on most of them.

The job most disliked by the men was burying a telephone cable all the way up to the front line at a depth of six feet. When the party arrived on the ground the portion for the night was marked off in lengths for each man. The slow workers were sometimes only half way down when the quick ones had finished. The little R.E. officer had provided himself with a six foot pole which he ran about with testing the depth, and meticulously insisting that it should be exactly the same everywhere. The result

was that sometimes the sodden earth of Flanders fell in in spots, and had to be dug out again with much profanity.

On one night when the R.E. officer proposed to change the venue when our men had their digging half done, Flynn of Honduras lost his rag, abused him roundly, and took his men home. He was the most popular officer in the battalion for some time. When the inevitable chit arrived from Headquarters asking for an explanation, Captain Thompson first strafed him severely, and then took his side and backed him through thick and thin.

This digging in the open up to the reserve lines was eerie work at night, and not without its danger. We were fortunate enough to have no casualties.

One night, as we were operating near the reserve line, a few men came up in the dark from a working party nearby. One was carrying on his back a man hit in the leg by a machine-gun bullet. He demanded the way to the nearest dressing-station. No one answered at once, whereupon he remarked, "Pack of bloody dummies!" and trudged off in high dudgeon.

As a variant from the telephone wire we had the "Chinese Wall" to operate on—a huge wall of sand-bags with dugouts here and there in it, which was constructed along behind the second line to serve as an assembly place when the attack came off. I had my party at work here one day by daylight, and, hearing some rumour of a stunt in the neighbourhood about six, I arranged with the R.E. officer to take the men off work a little early at 5.30. Sure

enough, we had not got many yards down the communication trench on our way home, when, like Lot's wife, we looked back and saw the scene of our recent labours shrouded in the dust and smoke of the Boche shells.

Besides these works the preparations for June 7th included a water supply laid on in pipes to the front line, a tunnel, with large dugouts, which ran from the entrance to the communication trenches to the front line also, and various new roads cut out from the back areas to the line, so as to distribute the enemy shell fire when the time came.

We had no reason, on the whole, to quarrel with this tour of duty. Having got one's party at work, it was usually possible to adjourn to some neighbouring dugout, where there was an officers' mess, and cadge a tea or so. Our off days were spent in bridge and draughts and occasional walks round the country and visits to Bailleul.

On one of the latter I went to a shop to buy some perfume for my wife. It was run by some French girls who understood English fairly well. While I was there two officers came in, and one of them pointed to a notice in French-English anent some brilliantine, and laughed. When they were gone the girls turned it back to front. I had a look at it and found that the English ran something to this effect: "Much the most beautiful to entertain and glitter ('entretenir et glisser' in the French version) the hair. None greasy substance in it." I offered the damsels, "Much the best to treat the hair and make it glisten. No greasy substance in it," as a better

translation. With this effort, poor as it was, they were quite satisfied, and said they would send it to Paris and have it printed.

Having done this good work, I adjourned to a tea-shop where, to my surprise and pleasure, I saw two British nurses in fetching grey uniforms. They were not a common sight so far up the line, though I have also seen them in Poperinghe.

My evening finished, as usual in Bailleul, with a French dinner and a Pierrot performance. The troupe possessed quite a good "girl." Some of the men who took the lady's parts in these troupes were real experts, while others, either by a gruff voice or something mannish in their gestures, gave away the case rather patently. We returned by moonlight and motor to our billets and the nearer thunder of the guns.

During these months of preparation the British shell fire was unceasing, and grew in volume week by week as more guns were mounted. At last they became so plentiful that all idea of hiding them was abandoned, and we saw the unusual spectacle of guns lying wheel by wheel in the open.

On May 13th I did the dirty on a lance-corporal on my work party by reporting him for absence from his job. He lost his stripe, and deserved to, as he had been malingering for some time.

Our turn now came for the front line again, but after a few days I found my name in orders for a week's course at the Brigade School in Locre, and came out again for another cushy time.

This school was run by a very decent captain of the Irish Rifles, one Hope-Carson, an elderly man with a family. He had been so sure there was going to be a war that he had come home from South Africa in 1913, and stayed almost a year, so as to be on the spot when it broke out. Then he returned to South Africa, and had hardly got there when the upheaval came and brought him back once more.

The school was chiefly taken up with map making, and reading, and with a study of the elaborate model of the German position on Wyttschaete, which had been constructed by an engineer near Locre. This covered a considerable piece of ground, and was an exact model of the hill and all the systems of trenches with their respective names. It was altered as new trenches were spotted by the aeroplanes, or old ones smashed up by our fire. A high wooden platform ran round it from which a bird's eye view could be obtained. This open advertisement of our intentions struck a good many officers with surprise.

The model was open to anyone, and Captain Thompson was highly disgusted when he went to inspect it and was elbowed by a fat Belgian civilian. Some held the opinion that the whole thing was a blind for the spies, and that we were not going to attack there at all, but the event proved them wrong.

In Captain Hope-Carson's school we spent a very pleasant week, working from 9.15 to 12, and from 2 to 2.30 only. We messed in the ever pleasant Convent and slept in tents, three in each, nearby. The weather was glorious and we enjoyed it to the full.

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S— and F— of the 8th were with me, and were very good company. They arrived one night from Bailleul having fared festively. One sat down on his bed to read his letters, and declared after a while he was too drunk. Then he said, "This is serious, you know, the girl wants me to marry her." We persuaded him not to wire his consent till the morning and so got him to go to bed.

On one of the days of this week I had the chance of visiting Kemmel, and taking a look from the hill over the enemy country through a loophole. The hill was honeycombed with gun positions, and underground galleries, and from one of these I got a splendid view behind the German lines. It was a desolate sight—a wide stretch of flat and barren earth, with no movement on it except the unceasing fountains of dust and smoke thrown up by our exploding shells.

After looking at it, it was easy to understand the bitter complaint of a German Tommy in a captured letter. He averred that he had been a long time in the front line and shelled all the time, while the supplies could not come up, and he had nothing decent to eat, and he was unable to shave, so that his beard had grown and his gas mask did not fit him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE EVE OF THE ATTACK.

ON May 27th I rejoined our battalion. We were now billeted on "York Road," which ran just behind the communication trenches from the line. Our mess was in the Doctor's House, the remnants of a comfortable country doctor's residence whence the occupant had departed to make room for a more deadly class of practitioner. The men lived in some buildings hard by.

Our house had a decent cellar which was most welcome at times. During the day we could sit in the garden unmolested, and count the heavy and light shells and the gas shells in their continuous passage over our heads to the Boche lines. In the evenings, however, when the munitions and supplies were coming up, we were generally strafed for a while, and when it got particularly lively there was a general meeting in the cellar.

On the opposite side of the road a wood served by its echoes to double the noise of the shell bursts. It also contained a battery or two of field guns which fired salvoes at times, with a racket which shook the house and put the heart crossways in us.

One night in the cellar I noticed a stranger beside me who looked somewhat rattled. I asked where he came from, and he said he had been beside the driver of a motor lorry which was coming up, loaded with gas cylinders. Our road was the main route to the line. As the lorry came opposite the Doctor's House the front was struck with a shell and the driver killed, and my friend had legged it into our cellar. His fear was that a shell would drop on the gas cylinders and poison the neighbourhood. Luckily no such thing happened. The lorry being disabled, however, the cylinders were taken out and laid along the side of the road in the ditch, where they lay during the rest of our stay.

I left that unhealthy neighbourhood without regret. At the end of our period the Boche put two "five nines" into the house a short way down the road, where the Colonel and the Adjutant were stopping, and killed one of the Colonel's runners. He and the Adjutant escaped almost by a miracle and came down to our shanty for the rest of the night.

On May 28th I had a working party up the line, and visited "Major" Thompson, of the 9th, in his dugout. Our good skipper had received the promotion he so well deserved shortly before, and, to our great regret, was transferred, as second in command under Colonel Hunt, to the 9th Dublins. Leonard Sheridan of Achill took our company, and was in command of it until I left it in August.

A new draft from home joined us while we were here, and had a rather damping reception, as a shell dropped into their billet in the barn on the first

night and exploded there, luckily without doing much damage.

On June 2nd, five days before the push, we departed from the Doctor's House and gladly betook ourselves a few miles further back. We left, of course, by night, and reached our destination, tents pitched in a field some way outside Bailleul, by daylight, when we retired to bed and slept till 10 a.m. This location was a distinct improvement. The weather was delightfully fine and warm, ideal for being under canvas. The camp was clean and green and fresh, and there was little to do in the daytime.

However, there was one fly in our ointment. Some Boche gunner, who was reported to have his weapon on a barge on a canal, used to open fire on our camp at intervals, dropping a shell every few minutes for a while, and imparting an air of uneasiness to the place. By day we had to retire out of the camp to the next field farther on, where we moved a hundred yards or so each time he lengthened his trajectory, and so kept out of his way. By night we had to leave our tents a few times, and take to sleeping along the hedgerows of adjoining fields.

A cow in one of the fields nearby was blown up by a shell one day and came down again unharmed except that she appeared to have got shell shock, as she remained immovable for a considerable time.

One unlucky shell in the daytime fell near an old farmhouse at our corner of the camp, and caught Cooney and Marchant, two 2nd Lieutenants of the Dublins, killing both. They were the only casualties, I think. Marchant had been in the next cubicle to

me at the Divisional School, and Cooney had come out with me from Dublin, two decent chaps.

The railway station at Bailleul came in for a good deal of attention, and we could see the shells bursting on it from our camp. One day we enjoyed a particularly fine display of fireworks which went on for hours. Later we learned that it was not an intensive bombardment, as we had supposed, but an ammunition train which a shell had set on fire.

In spite of these distractions we had quite a pleasant few days. Our Division was marked out to assault Wytschaete Ridge, and we heard afterwards was expected to get it severely in the neck, which may have been the reason for leaving us a few days in peace.

Word came to me one day that an officer wanted to see me, and to my surprise I found Carl Booth, looking very posh in his 2nd Lieutenant's uniform, not long out from Ireland. He was very pleased with the world. I did not see him again until I met him in the Prince of Wales Hospital, London, in August.

When orders came in for the push a ballot was taken to see what officers would be left out to remain behind and act as a reserve in case those who went over the top suffered heavily. To Sheridan, Johnston and myself the lot fell to "only stand and wait."

Bailleul was visited in force by the officers a night or so before the big event, as a last flutter. We had a gay time in the restaurant where I supped, and the fun, as usual on these occasions, was led by Irish officers.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MESSINES OFFENSIVE.

ON the night of June 6th everything was in readiness. Officers had donned in most cases Tommies' uniforms, to make them less conspicuous. All the paraphernalia had been overhauled and examined, and at dusk the Battalion moved out to march to the assembly point. I felt rather mean when I said "good-bye" to my friends and my platoon, and saw the crowd depart in the height of good spirits. Father Doyle went with them. I saw the Colonel take him aside for a private talk before they left, perhaps giving him some last commissions in case he was knocked out.

The mighty preparation of months was now on the point of being tested. Guns literally wheel to wheel, and even posted in the open had been pumping shells by the thousand on the enemy. New roads had been cut to move the troops by. Telephone wires had been buried six feet deep in the ground for miles up to the front line. Tunnels had been dug up to the front line, and at last the assaulting brigades were massed in their proper positions, waiting for zero hour to go over the top.

With Sheridan and Johnston I started in the small hours for Mont Rouge, a hill which commanded a good view of the surrounding country, and got there before 3 a.m.

Just then a calm before the storm appeared to have settled on the hostile lines, which were marked by the arcs of the ascending Verey lights. The shelling gradually died away, and there was almost a dead silence when, at 3.9 a.m., an old friend who used to harry us in camp pooped off a single shot. He got "some" retaliation. Just a minute later the surprise packet we had prepared for the Boche was revealed—the first mine went off in a cloud of dust lit by a fiery glow, and was followed by its eighteen brethren all along the front. We heard no noise of their explosion where we were five miles off, but the hill on which we stood shook under our feet like a mass of jelly. The debris thrown upwards by the mines still hung in the air when our tremendous barrage opened. Terrifying as the mines appeared, the barrage looked worse. The whole line was enveloped in clouds of smoke and dust and flashing flame, and the roar of the artillery and rattle of machine-guns combined in one continuous deadly thunder.

We stayed for a while gazing at the imposing sight, while the summer morning dawned peaceable and bright about us, and then returned to camp to breakfast and wait for the first news of how things were going.

As the morning advanced the first lots of prisoners came down, being marched past our camp. They came in good numbers and their guards assured us that things were going well.

The success of this, perhaps the best organised "stunt" of the war, is now a matter of history.

To the 16th Division had been assigned one of the

hardest nuts to crack. In fact, Wytschaete Ridge, which the Germans had held for two and a half years and believed impregnable, was taken in a couple of hours, thanks to the mines and the tremendous artillery preparation, as well as the dash of the Irish soldiers.

Father Doyle, who was as usual well to the front, tells how he saw them rush from the assembly trenches while the earth and rocks flung up by the mines were still in the air, and advance so rapidly that the leading files ran into our own barrage.

The 48th Brigade, 2nd, 8th and 9th Dublin Fusiliers and 7th Rifles, was in reserve, and, assembled along the sandbag parapet known as "Chinese Wall," had to endure the ordeal of sitting still under heavy shell fire. Before long a shell landed right on the parapet blowing three men fifty yards away and burying five more.

Father Doyle ran out at once and gave absolution to the three dying men. Then he ran back to the wall, where the men seemed paralysed into inaction, except one sergeant who was tearing away sandbags and cursing volubly. The Padre came to his assistance and, his presence having the usual effect, the others plucked up heart to give a hand so that they dug out three of the five men alive, the other two having been killed by the explosion.

After this, as some of the troops were getting unsteady under the heavy fire in their exposed position, the good Padre restored their confidence by walking along the line without his tin hat or gas mask, which, as frequently happened him, he had forgotten.

Some strange sights were seen by the 8th as they went forward over the hill to consolidate the position and hold it against counter attacks. In one spot a train of transport waggons and horses were lying completely smashed up, having been apparently caught by the barrage. In a regimental headquarters dugout the adjutant was found lying dead at the top of the stairs, and the colonel had been killed as he was getting out of his bunk when the mines went off.

Having held the line on the 7th and 8th, the battalion came back to York Road on the 9th June, where we rejoined them and found them in great fettle. In spite of the tremendous shelling they had been through, the casualties were very slight. We only lost one officer, Hastings, who was badly hit in the left shoulder.

The men slept in an open field behind the "Doctor's House" on the night of the 9th. It was a much healthier locality now than during our last stay there, the Boche having been pushed some miles farther off. A few stray shells did drop round, but no one was hurt. One youth had a narrow escape as a shell fell right beside him. By some miracle he escaped unhurt and was able to get up and run like a hare.

Next day we marched back to Locre, in very jovial style. The men of my platoon were decked with German helmets and caps, and had improvised a band of mouth organs and tin cans which discoursed martial music by the way.

INTERVAL FROM JUNE, 1917,
TO MARCH, 1918, UNCOMPLETED.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE GERMAN PUSH, MARCH, 1918.

WHEN the famous German offensive started in March, 1918, on the Somme front, I was then temporarily attached to an Entrenching Battalion stationed near Peronne. We were some twenty miles behind the line, and engaged in laying down light railways for the use of the Boche, as it proved. It was a "cushy" job—every night in bed under canvas and no particular danger except when some long range shells appeared. They were a most disquieting brand of hardware. They neither whistled nor burred as they came, and gave you no opportunity to duck or fall flat. The first notice of their presence was a sudden volcano of earth and stones, in the middle of the camp perhaps, followed by an ear-splitting bang. A performance eminently calculated to put the wind up the troops. However, their bark proved worse than their bite in our case, and we had no one seriously injured.

The morning the offensive opened we heard the distant rumble of artillery going in great style and rubbed our hands saying "Now the Alleymans are getting it in the neck." It never occurred to us that they could break through.

The first definite news we got was from an officer who had left us a short time before and gone to the Field Artillery. He arrived in camp more or less in rags, and told us how they had bombarded our artillery for eight hours with gas shells (and no one who has not worn a gas mask for half an hour or so can understand what that means), and then, having broken through on another part of the front, came round behind the guns in the mist and wiped out the gunners with machine-gun fire. He and one or two privates were the only survivors who got away from his battery.

Still we did not contemplate the possibility of the enemy reaching our part of the country, and carried on at our railway work for the next couple of days. During this time we watched a continual procession of motor lorries and cars hurrying west, crowded with bands, perriot troupes, canteen people, and all the various non-combatant branches of the army that live behind the line. Train loads of American railway troops, too, came down our light railway, and passed along to a more salubrious locality, firing off their rifles cow-boy fashion in the exuberance of their spirits.

As our friend the enemy was reported to be getting unpleasantly near, we received orders to shift

our camp across the Somme to another suburb of Peronne. Here we stopped a night, but we found in the morning that the Canadian railway engineers, under whom we were working, had also flitted westward ho! without the polite formality of bidding us "good-bye." Accordingly we moved off ourselves just in time, leaving our kits behind us. The Somme bridges at Peronne were being blown up as we left, and shells were dropping on the opposite river bank as we passed along parallel to it. One general was seen later swimming back across the Somme. We were lucky that day in getting past a cross roads just before the German artillery was turned on it, and made a considerable mess of the transport and guns with which the road was crowded. Some enterprising German airmen were knocking about there also, machine-gunning the roads. Vaulting ambition proved a snare to one of them, for it induced him to attack a machine-gun school, with the result that he was quickly brought down.

We spent a couple of days trekking across the devastated area of the former Somme battles, and finally came to an anchor at Harbonnières, a village on the Peronne-Amiens Road. Sleeping in the open without our sleeping bags proved a rather chilly business at that time of the year. The bombs which the Boche airmen dropped round the country side tended to wakefulness also; but a day's marching with your baggage on your back is always an excellent soporific, and you have to drop bombs pretty near the average infantryman to deprive him of his beauty sleep.

On March 29th orders came in for nine officers and about three hundred men of the Dublin Fusiliers to proceed to join the 1st and 2nd Dublins, who, after being badly cut up in the line, had been fighting a rearguard action since the 21st with the other remnants of the 48th Brigade. This was the beginning of forty-eight hours footwork with little sleep and less to eat. We marched to the transport lines near La Motte that evening, and after a few hours spent in fitting out the men with gas masks, ammunition, and iron rations, left in the small hours to look for our battalions, reported to be at Cappy. We footed it all the next day towards Bray-Sur-Somme, along roads packed with long lines of artillery, who were drawing out their guns to save them from falling into the enemy's hands. Numerous fires were to be seen to the east where our people had lit up aerodromes and dumps of material to prevent their being of use to the enemy.

Having pushed on as far as the village of Eteneham, which we found abandoned by both French inhabitants and British soldiers, we came across the General who was directing operations in that quarter, and received orders from him to get back across the Somme again, as all that area was to be evacuated. Just before we turned back we were interested to see a number of tanks and whippets crawling around. The latter are light tanks travelling much faster than the heavies, and very unpleasant they must be to infantry, who find a little fort on wheels with a machine-gun buzzing along towards them at ten or twelve miles an hour. The

men in charge looked as if they had been having a pretty rough time.

In accordance with our orders we retraced our steps, speeded on our way by a few shells, and plodded back to our transport lines, where we arrived dog tired, having been on our feet for over thirty-six hours.

Here we slept on the cold, cold ground for a few hours, and started again early in the morning of the 27th for Mericourt, where our battalions were now reported to be. This time we marched along the Amiens-Peronne Road through the village of La Motte, which was being evacuated by the few troops who remained in it. A little farther on we saw the familiar burst of shrapnel over the fields to our left, and realised that we were near our journey's end, and it was time to put on our tin hats; and prepare for the business of the day.

We could see some artillery horses and men on a side road to the left getting peppered rather unpleasantly with shells, and of course that proved to be our road too. However, we passed through in a quiet interval, and close to the village of Morcourt met a major of the 16th Division, a very self-possessed and cheerful person, who was organising things in that locality as calmly as if the whole business was a peace time manœuvre instead of serious warfare. We announced ourselves and our business, and were broken up into several parties, and allotted positions in the line which it was proposed to hold with the assistance of some field guns at that point, to cover the withdrawal of the troops ahead.

Together with another 2nd Lieutenant and about twenty or thirty men, I got a position on a bluff commanding a cross roads just outside the village of Morcourt, with orders to see the last of our men through before leaving.

The German method of advance seemed to be to shell each ridge in succession and push forward their men in small parties covered by machine-gun fire, which they provided much more plentifully than we liked, and attended by numbers of aeroplanes which dodged about like bats overhead, flying very low, peppering the troops on the ground with machine-guns and directing the fire of their artillery on any target they saw. Their observation was pretty good. I remember watching a gathering of some horse transport of ours opposite where we were stationed. They were apparently well hidden under the crest of the hill, but it was not long before the shells began to come over right on top of them, and they had to gallop for it down a breakneck hill in a fashion which would have given points to the Gadarene swine.

The next item of interest was a shell which dropped into our position and knocked out three men. One got away, but the other two we had to leave behind us. One died in a few minutes, and, though I succeeded in getting a doctor who was near to bind up the other, he gave small hopes of his recovery. It was rather amusing to notice what an excellent incentive this was to digging. The men, who had not been very keen on it up to then, did

wonderful spade work in the next quarter of an hour and were soon provided with excellent holes.

The German barrage was now coming rather near. They were searching the ridge opposite to us and they included in their repertoire a kind of shell I had never seen before and did not fancy the look of it all. It appeared to be filled with some sort of combustible material and went up in a huge bonfire when it burst. Going to Heaven in a fiery chariot of that description had no attractions for me.

As none of our men had passed for some time and the enemy were now close at hand, the other officer and I decided it was time to be going, so we ordered the men to withdraw, and walked off in the most disagreeable shower of machine-gun bullets.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OUR COUNTER ATTACK.

WE had retired some hundreds of yards without any casualties that I remember when we met two senior officers, a major of the Hampshire Regiment and a captain of the Dublins, who were organising a counter attack.

The captain asked who we were and when I told him "Dublins," he said they were the people he wanted. So we stopped the men around, formed them in line, and started in the opposite direction. Though many of them were mere boys, and what we were asking them to do looked like certain death, there was not the slightest hesitation.

We advanced in a line between fifty and a hundred strong. The Major led in excellent style, followed by the Captain with a blanket over his arm, which struck me as a funny way of going into battle. When one remembers, however, that he had had a week of fighting and sleeping in the open when he slept at all, the blanket does not seem so much out of the way.

We were now moving across open country, and the enemy artillery was not long in getting the range of us. Shells dropped before and behind all down the line, and the gunners appeared to have their eyes well in.

As we approached the enemy we could see them coming out of their cover about three hundred or four hundred yards ahead and running back. Then an enterprising German opened on our left flank with a machine-gun, and knocked over practically everyone that was left, while the remainder lay down.

The officer who had been with me all through was deeply wounded in the back just then by a shell which burst behind him. Having tied him up as well as I could, I moved over to a Tommy who was shot through the legs, and was starting on him when the bullet with my name on it arrived. As it hit me in the left side I fell into my tin hat and concluded that I was killed. As a matter of fact I wasn't. The whistle in my breast pocket turned the bullet and changed what would have been a serious wound into a comparatively light one.

They say that folk on the point of death see all their past life pass before them, and a Punch artist, I believe, has given expression to the idea in a picture which shows a gentleman in the last throes and before his eyes a long line of whiskey bottles and soda water syphons. No such vision came to trouble me, nor any very appropriate reflections. As well as I remember, I felt rather disgusted at finding myself in such an unpleasant predicament, and wondered

how long I should take to go off. My experience has been that you never do feel the proper sentiments as described by the magazine story and the novel dealing with warfare.

It was now dusk and things had quieted down for a space. The machine-gun fire and shelling had passed on behind us and our own people had not commenced to throw much over. I have no idea how long we lay around, face down to the ground, but it cannot have been long before the young fellow beside me interrupted my reflections by saying he saw the Boche coming along, and asking me did I think they would bayonet the wounded. I said "Not at all," but I did not feel quite so sure as I made out. However, our anxiety was soon relieved as a couple of them arrived, carrying very light equipment so far as I could see, pulled me up and took my revolver but none of my personal belongings. I pointed out that I was wounded and they whistled up a couple of stretcher bearers, who tied me up and set me on my feet, when I found I was able to walk with assistance. We went some short distance to a haystack, behind which, to my great delight, I found Briscoe, another officer of the Dublins, who had come up with me that morning. He proved a friend in need that night and next morning.

Of the four officers who took part in our section of the counter attack, the Major was seriously wounded, shot through the chest, and taken prisoner also; the Captain, and my friend who was hit in the back, I believe, both died of their wounds in German hands, and I fancy the men as a whole fared no better.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BEHIND THE GERMAN LINES.

AFTER a short time behind our haystack we moved off in the dark to a small chapel in the village nearby, where we spent the night with a number of other wounded, both Germans and prisoners. Some of them died in the night. Our people had begun to shell the place before we got to it, and knocked a considerable number of slates off the church that night. One shell, I believe, went clean through the roof and out the other side. For my part I was lying on the floor, aching in every bone, and too much taken up with myself to worry very much. It is one of the compensations of nature that when you are badly wounded, or desperately exhausted, or extremely fed up from some other cause, you cease to worry about anything else.

My recollections of the next few days are not very well arranged. Next morning Briscoe helped me along to a church in another village across the Somme, which was being used as a dressing-station, but had to leave me there. While I was lying on the floor with a number of Germans, some of our airmen came over and dropped bombs. They broke most of the glass in the church windows and hit some German wounded who were lying outside. At least one chap was brought in beside me looking pretty bad, and a German doctor who spoke English informed me that

he would have got better of his first wound, but that now he would die on account of the bomb.

Having been bombed by both German and British I must say I much prefer the former. The German drones around and drops one here and one there, but these Britishers seemed to be dropping them one after another as quick as you could count. I heartily wished they would transfer their most commendable activities to another part of the front.

Our airmen had certainly inspired the Boche with a considerable amount of respect. The villages were provided with numerous well labelled shelters against "flieurs," and their name was on everyone's lips.

Having had my wound dressed and been inoculated with anti-tetanus stuff, my next job was to manage to get along from one dressing-station to another with the stream of German wounded, till I reached one from which I could get to a hospital.

By now I was beginning to realise how much inferior the Boche R.A.M.C. was to ours. The happy man who got a blighty on our side of the line and could reach on foot or stretcher a dressing-station, was on the pig's back, as our countrymen say, from that moment. His wounds were dressed, he was fixed up in a comfortable motor ambulance, and travelled like a lord by motor and luxurious hospital train and ship till he found himself home, being fed like a fighting cock, and kept in cigarettes by benevolent old ladies.

The other side of the line things were far different. The dressing-stations were nothing like so well fitted

up or organised. While the doctors I met seemed to be doing their best, they were without a great deal of the equipment which our men had. Perhaps the most conspicuous want to an ignorant layman like myself was linen bandages. They were using paper whenever they could possibly contrive to do so, and a very poor substitute it was. Of course the food everywhere was wretched. I shall speak of that in feeling terms later.

The worst part of the business from my point of view was the want of decent transport. The supply was limited and bad. It was curious to one used to seeing the roads of France covered with our thousands of motor cars and lorries, to observe that the German army had not a rubber-tyred vehicle in it except a few staff cars used by the great ones. Some of the wounded went in handcarts, some succeeded in getting on to the iron wheeled motor lorries, of which there was a scanty supply. The rest walked. There were cases where prisoners shot through the stomach had to walk considerable distances.

When you had secured a coveted seat on one of the lorries your troubles were not at an end. I cannot imagine a much more uncomfortable way of travelling than bumping over rough roads on those iron wheels, with a wound in your side or anything else. I spent the best part of one night strap hanging, or in other words, standing up and holding on to the roof, as I found there were less jars in that position than in any other.

Before that I shuffled along a considerable distance in company with some German Tommies. We passed along the same road to Bray-sur-Somme that I had

been over a couple of days before, and our dead were to be seen lying here and there still unburied. We passed some battalions of Boche infantry going up to the front line, with officers at their head on horseback, who looked down their noses at me in what I thought rather contemptuous fashion. However, I did not stop to argue the point with them. I was too well pleased to realise that I was still alive to let that or anything else weigh on my spirits, and I was content to let them pass on and be dealt with by the friends I had left behind me.

A very funny sight was four officers at the end of the battalion seated in an old cab drawn by a ramshackle horse, which would have brought them under notice of the police if they had used it in Dublin. I presume it was the quarter-master and his friends.

All the material, indeed, of the Boche army that I saw appeared to be in a very worn condition, and it struck one that they had done very well indeed to follow up the extremely rapid advance of their infantry so effectively with guns and transport, under the circumstances. However, such high tactical questions are not for the ordinary lieutenant to trouble his mind about.

The Fritzes with whom I journeyed these two days were quite decent. They did not appear to harbour any feelings of animosity against me, were quite willing to smoke all my cigarettes (except the last one which one of them politely refused) and saw that I got my share of black bread, red jam, and substitute coffee at any of the places where food was going en route, and gave me a leg up when it

came to climbing on a lorry. The only really hostile one was a certain son of Belial, who met me going into one place where we got coffee and bread, and took the trench coat which I had over my arm. I thought it was gone for good, but, as I left, one of his comrades came after me and handed it back intact, except for a stale sandwich which was in one of the pockets.

They were all in the best of good spirits thinking they had won, and assured me again and again that the war was finished, that everything would be over by summer! It was a very common thing in those days to be asked how long more we thought the war would last, and nothing annoyed the Boche more than to say, "Oh, two or three years, perhaps." He was thoroughly tired of it even when he was winning in the spring of 1918, so we can imagine how little he liked it in the autumn.

On March 30th I reached Le Cateau, and in the dressing-station there found the first large consignment of British prisoners. There were a few officers and some hundreds of other ranks, all wounded and housed in a disused factory of some kind

The conditions were decidedly bad. The place was overcrowded. There was no hospital equipment. The beds were wooden frames, with an upper and lower bunk, placed in rows so close as to leave bare room to pass between. The bedding consisted of a sack of shavings and a couple of blankets. A great number of badly wounded men were lying on sack-ing on the floor. The British officer who had taken charge told me that when he came there, some days

before, things were in a very bad condition indeed. There was no organisation, and no orderlies, and men who were unable to leave their beds had no one to do anything for them. He turned the more lightly wounded men into orderlies, had the place cleaned up, and made the best of a bad job with limited means. The food, of course, was wretched.

After a couple of nights here, during which, by advice, I slept with my boots under my pillow lest they should be pinched, I got away on a hospital train for Germany and left Le Cateau without regret.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ACROSS GERMANY IN A HOSPITAL TRAIN.

OUR train had on board eleven British officers, including three Englishmen, three South Africans, four Irishmen, and one Scotchman—not a bad mixture. There were also about a hundred British 'Tommies, a French doctor, and a number of French R.A.M.C. men, and a large number of Boche wounded, and of course a guard provided with rifles to shoot at anyone who tried to leave.

We could not find out where we were going, chiefly, I think, because the Boche did not know themselves. We were five days and four nights in that train, and we always held the opinion afterwards that they just started it off to wander round the railways of Germany till they found a place which would consent to have us dumped upon it.

We had black bread served out to us every now and again, and at odd stations we were all turned out and marched to a big shed generally, where we were served out with bowls of soup or macaroni. The quantities of the latter stuff which they appeared to possess, went to show how successful the great German offensive in Italy must have been. These meals were quite irregular, and we sometimes had a very hungry few hours while we wondered where the next one would be.

There were no arrangements for treating the wounded, and I will leave to your imagination rather than give details of the condition of men with discharging wounds untended for five days or more. The wonder was that so far as I know no one died on the journey.

We were not so badly off, in any case, as a train-load of Russians who had been sent earlier in the war to the same destination as we ultimately reached, namely, "Hammerstein," a town in West Prussia. These wretched men, to the number of several hundreds, were a week in the train, during which the Germans gave them no food. Numbers died of starvation as soon as they left the train, and a large proportion of them succumbed eventually to this barbarous treatment.

The Russkies altogether had a very thin time in Germany. Eight hundred of them were buried in Hammerstein alone. Of the total number that died in captivity I have no idea. They did not appear to have the stamina of the British, and besides, their treatment generally was very bad. Had we lost instead of winning in 1918 I should have a very different story to tell, if I were here to tell any story at all.

The first part of our journey lay through some fine river and mountain scenery. We passed the Rhine at Cologne, and worked round the suburbs of Berlin, and saw several other famous cities, if one can be said to see a city from a railway train.

So far as I could make out nine-tenths of the population of Germany live in huge blocks of buildings

let out in flats, and their monumental appearance may have been the reason why the view we had of these places was distinctly superior to the dreary prospect of dirty backyards, which is all one can see as a rule as one enters an English or Irish town by rail.

When we left the Rhine behind us the country became very flat and tame, its only beauty being the woods which we passed. The Germans appear to be great on afforestation, and timber is one of the few things they have a plentiful supply of.

At length, after lying in sidings to let everything else pass, and dodging along at the leisurely pace which Continental trains affect, on April 6th we reached Hammerstein, where the French and British were detrained, counted three or four times by a fussy little German commandant, whose whiskers were the most striking thing about him, and marched to a hospital nearby, our joy at getting off the train being enhanced by seeing the Boche Tommies had to continue their dismal trek still farther east.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HAMMERSTEIN.

THE hospital here held a strange conglomeration of British, French, Germans, Russians, Poles, etc. It was, of course, surrounded by barbed wire and had a guard of the most debilitated, weary, and useless old soldiers I ever saw, even in Germany. They sauntered up and down, when they were awake, at their posts with their rifles slung over their shoulders, hands in pockets and pipe in mouth, in a fashion which would have given a British Sergeant-Major apoplexy. I had always thought the German army was a model of smartness and neatness, but, whether the shine had been taken out of them by 1918, or I was unfortunate in the specimens I met, I never saw any of them up to the standard of the Dublin Fusiliers.

This hospital was a converted barrack. The officers got a couple of rooms containing beds, a table, a stool apiece, and some lockers. There the furnishing stopped. We also had some bowls to eat our soup and potatoes out of, and a basin or two to wash in, and a towel apiece. Such luxuries as looking glasses, hair brushes, and soap, they did not indulge us with. Genuine soap, as a matter of fact, was unobtainable in Germany, and the average Boche would sell his soul for a piece of Pear's. That was one of the many results of the British naval blockade which, notwithstanding all the hard things said about it by pessimists like "John Bull" or the "Daily Mail," did far and away more harm, in my opinion,

than all the submarines and air raids we suffered from.

Having installed us in our quarters they brought us down next morning and had us washed and our heads shaved by Russian orderlies, and served us out with hospital suits. They then proceeded to fill up forms with all the particulars we would give them of our names, professions, ages and religions, and the names, profession, ages and religions of our fathers and mothers, and other useless details beloved by the methodical Boche.

The German doctor in charge here appeared to be efficient, and also did his best for us. He was very keen on picking up English, and by the end of our five weeks' stay had advanced from "Haf you pine?" meaning "Have you pain?" and "I will gif you a new dressing," which were his earliest efforts, to being able to manage quite a good deal of conversation. He was assisted by a Russian doctor—a prisoner for three years—and a matron. The latter treated us quite well, too, and as a special mark of favour, used to bring up a pot of very thin tea to us every evening. We hardly realised at the time what a valuable gift this was.

The Russian doctor was a thorough gentleman and a very decent fellow. On the night of our arrival he brought us up a lot of food, eggs, butter, etc., which he could ill afford from his own private store. He did everything possible for us while we were there. Having been three years a prisoner he was quite settled down, and worked regularly in the hospital. He told us that conditions had much improved. In the earlier days it was a common thing

for the sentry to fire into his room at night if the notion took him, and complaints were useless. From him, too, we got details of the abominable treatment of the rank and file of Russian prisoners.

There was also a Pole of good family there, who had been a prisoner for years. He was one of the most courteous and nicest fellows I have ever met. The Russian hated the Germans, and the Pole hated both Russian and German impartially.

Another interesting prisoner here was a Roumanian doctor. He had been deported from Roumania after its conquest on account of his anti-German activities, and for between one and two years had not been permitted either to write or hear from his wife and children. I have never met anyone who detested the German more thoroughly or could sum him up more neatly, and I am glad to say I understood enough French to get the drift of his entertaining conversation as we sat on a bench in the hospital grounds.

Our visitors here were not numerous. The Commandant of the area—the most dangerous looking brute I had yet seen in Germany—called on us one day and marched into our ward saying, “Good-bye,” about the only word of English he knew, and which he apparently considered as a salutation. However, we kept our faces straight, as he did not seem to be the kind of person it would be safe to laugh at, and after a few remarks in German he took himself off.

We had several visits from a civilian doctor, a fat little fellow from the town, who seemed to regard us as an exhibit and brought his daughter and a friend

to view us one day. When he heard I was an Irishman from Dublin he nearly fell on my neck under the impression that I was a Sinn Feiner, and on a subsequent visit very much disgusted an English officer by pointing him out to his daughter as the Sinn Feiner. He had one good point—he kept the best cigarettes which I came across in Germany, and we occasionally got one from him.

We also had one or two calls from the local German pastor, who had been a missionary in India, and had been interned there early in the war before he got home. He spoke English very well and asked could he get anything for us. We asked for some books and in a few days got several volumes—a theological work by Denny, Washington Irving's Essays, Dickens' "Christmas Carol," "Little Lord Fauntelroy," and a similar though inferior work called "Things Will Take a Turn." These we read religiously and passed from one to another; for beggars can't be choosers, and almost any printed matter is better than none. Luckily one of us had a pack of cards and I had some patience cards in my pocket, and many an hour was passed with bridge and patience.

The diet was very thin indeed, and the hours between nine and twelve, when the only meal which had any substance in it came along, were among the most leaden I have ever known.

Another misfortune was that all our tobacco and cigarettes had given out by this time. We were able to buy the Boche substitutes for those articles in a canteen in the hospital grounds, kept by a rapacious

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old gentleman with a Jewish nose. Here I obtained some extraordinary mixture of chopped up timber to burn in my pipe. His cigarettes, so called, went up a few pfennings in price every day or two, and as our money was now almost at an end, each rise was marked by an indignation meeting among us officers which cut very little ice, as the Americans say.

As soon as we arrived we asked leave to write home. We had not had a chance to do so up to then. Our first cards were written on April 8th, but did not reach home till the same date in June, a circumstance to which I owe the pleasure of having read several rather flattering obituary letters on my behalf since I came home. The first letters I received from home came on August 27th, exactly five months from the day I was captured. At the best of times it took about three or four months to receive an answer to any particular letter. One of the many causes of the delay was that the letters were kept for ten days to see whether there was any invisible ink used in them.

The Scotch officer who had come to Hammerstein with us unfortunately died there. He had been shot through the upper jaw from behind the ear, and from want of proper attention the septic matter in the wound ate away the artery, with the result that violent hæmorrhage set in, and in spite of all the German doctor could do, he died in a couple of days. His death came as a shock to us, for he was a man of such fine spirit that he never uttered a complaint, and though he had been rather poorly he seemed much better on the day on which the fatal attack began. I have little doubt that his life would not have been sacrificed had he been in British hands.

CHAPTER XXX.

VIA KARLSRUHE TO RASTATT.

HAMMERSTEIN was only a temporary resting place, the Germans in March having so many prisoners that they did not know what to do. On May 10th, after varied hopes and fears, we left it, well pleased, for Karlsruhe, the distributing centre for prisoners in Germany. We were nine officers. One had died and one was still unfit to travel. We were, of course, provided with a guard, who carried each a portmanteau packed with food for their own consumption. We received some black bread and wurst or sausage to carry us over our journey, but what was more to the point, got forty marks each on leaving, which enabled us to stand ourselves such food as could be got in the railway restaurants en route. There was not much of our money left when we reached our journey's end.

This journey was another trek across a large part of Germany, and, as we travelled by the ordinary passenger trains, it was an interesting opportunity to see a little of the life of the country. We were somewhat impressed by the amount of railway travelling that was done, particularly on Sunday. We were also struck with the magnificent uniforms and whiskers of railway guards and stationmasters, which

would almost lead one to suppose that the Germans kept those jobs for retired Field Marshals and Lord High Admirals.

Our eye was caught too by some of the fashions we saw, especially by a favourite one among youthful nuts of wearing no shirt under their coat and waistcoat. I rather fancy our naval blockade had something to do with setting that particular fashion.

We passed by tram from one station to another in Berlin, but as it was in the small hours of the morning did not see as much of it as we should have liked. We went through Karlsruhe station, where we endeavoured to annoy a flying corps officer we had with us, by pointing out that, notwithstanding all we had heard of successful bombing there, not a pane of glass in the station was broken.

On the 12th of May we found ourselves in Rastatt, Baden, not Karlsruhe, as we had expected. The latter was overflowing and Rastatt was used as an overflow camp. After a couple of nights in comfortable enough quarters in the fortress there, we were moved to a Lager outside the town. "Lager" is German for a camp.

Our hopes had been high when we left Hammerstein, but here we found we had rather fallen out of the fryingpan into the fire. Hundreds of officers were confined in a barbed wire enclosure, housed in long huts which were crowded with over a hundred officers each. Their furniture consisted of double decked beds, a couple of tables, and some stools. The washing arrangements comprised only three or four taps in the open air. The food was, as usual,

very bad, entirely unsatisfying, and very coarsely served.

The only means of passing the time was playing cards or reading, if one were fortunate enough to possess a book, which could be exchanged with someone else when finished, and these were rather scarce. Occasional lectures and debates were organised by a Padre of the South African Brigade and others, and helped to put in odd hours. Luckily the weather was gloriously fine and warm, and we had a beautiful view of wooded hills beyond our barbed wire.

After a few days here I went into hospital intending to have a bullet, which I was still carrying round in my carcase, removed. The surgeon there recommended me to keep it till I got back to England, but as they did not evince any desire to push me out, and as the food was better and the accommodation cleaner and more comfortable than in the Lager, I stayed there till we left on June 2nd.

Between two hundred and three hundred of us entrained that day to cross Germany once again, for the third time, and on the 4th reached Schweidnitz in Silesia, where we were marched to a large building that had once been a workhouse or reformatory, and was to be our home till December 19th.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SCHWEIDNITZ: LIFE IN A PRISON CAMP.

THE province of Silesia, grabbed by Frederick the Great from Austria, if I mistake not, is in the extreme east of Germany. Schweidnitz, with a population of about thirty-six thousand, is one of its largest towns, and it is situated in the south about twenty miles from the Austrian border. It is a considerable manufacturing town, and the country round is well cultivated. Even the roads are lined with fruit trees, which would prove too great a temptation, I fear, to the sons and daughters of Eve in this country, but the fact that it is "verboten" to pluck the fruit seems enough to protect them from the well disciplined German.

Schweidnitz boasts at least two illustrious natives. The great Von Moltke's farm and burial place are situated about four miles from the town, and his statue adorns the front of the police station.

Richtofen, the greatest of all flying men in the war, I am told, was also a Schweidnitzian, and lived in a handsome house in one of the best suburbs.

The Cathedral, which was just outside our lager, was rather remarkable as showing the influence of eastern architecture so far west. The spire was built of stone to a certain height and finished off with a

pagoda like structure of wood and gilt. The interior was very gorgeous. I attended Mass here one Sunday, but as I could not catch the Latin and I did not understand the German, in which what sounded a most eloquent and very lengthy sermon was preached, I was not greatly edified.

In coming to Schweidnitz we had reached the goal of our ambitions for the time being—a permanent camp—and though, as is usual in this vale of tears, it did not prove all our fancy painted, there was yet a decided improvement, and as time went on and we got more shaken down we managed to make things tolerably comfortable, or at any rate less uncomfortable than they had been.

There were two prisoners' camps, or "Kriegsgefangenen lagers," as the Boche calls them in his weird tongue, in the town. Lager one, which was about five minutes' walk away from ours, had been established some time and contained a mixture of military and naval officers. Ours, known as Lager two, was opened chiefly for our reception, and contained, when we arrived, only a few "old hands" from Lager one, who had been moved, I think, because they were regarded as turbulent spirits by their guardians. They were of the greatest use to us in putting us up to all the tips about what we could and could not get out of the Boche, and advising us as to how to organise things to the best advantage.

The prisoners in Lager one also sent over, out of the largeness of their hearts, as much food and clothing as they could spare to help to tide us over till

the time when our own food and clothes parcels should begin to arrive. This was a very welcome relief, as many of us were in the last stages of disreputable raggedness, and the taste of honest food again, after our long diet of soups, black bread, substitute coffee, sauerkraut, and other disagreeable and disconcerting edibles, was a godsend. A most touching sight was the deep emotion with which many smoked an English cigarette again, made of real tobacco, after three months' deprivation.

By July food parcels began to come in in fair quantities, and we lived entirely on them except for German potatoes and bread and occasionally vegetables. A canteen was established, and a camp library, and gas rings for cooking installed, so that our life began to assume a more civilised aspect.

The barrack room in which I found myself was pretty well crowded with twenty-seven officers, about a dozen of whom were Irishmen from the Ulster Division and the South Irish Division. As we slept and ate and generally lived and moved and had our being in this single room, you will understand how good tempered we were when I assure you that we had practically no rows.

The entire absence of privacy was one of the trials of Lager life, and some felt it so much that they built shacks of wooden framework and brown paper inside the barrack rooms, in which a mess of three or four could remove for a while from the sight, if not the sound, of their fellows.

Perhaps I can best give an idea of the life by a description of the ordinary Kriegsgefangener's day.

At 8.45 a.m. a bell rang, and at 9 the morning appel or roll call was held in the yard outside, where we were drawn up five deep and carefully counted by our custodians to see that no one had taken French leave in the night. If you were an energetic person you had risen early, had a cold shower, and secured a couple of gas rings to boil your kettle and porridge or fry your bacon for breakfast, or even perchance had breakfast over and time to smoke a cigarette. If you were not you probably rose a minute or two before 9 and rushed out in a dressing-gown and pyjamas. This was a continual bone of contention with the German authorities, who did not consider such a style of dress sufficiently regimental. Notwithstanding many ultimatums, however, there were always a number of us in greater or less *deshabille*.

Appel over, there was a wild rush by those who had parcel tickets to secure a front place in the queue. The home parcels came in each evening, and were locked up by the Germans and tickets made out for the owners. These had to be presented next morning at the parcel room, when the parcels were opened by Germans in presence of the owners, and everything examined. Tinned foods were taken away to lockers of which each officer had one, from which he was allowed to draw tins as he needed them, each morning at a fixed hour, also under watch of the Germans. Packets of tobacco, etc., not in tins were handed over at once after examination. The object of all this, of course, was to prevent the smuggling of maps, compasses, and other aids to escape, but notwithstanding it all there were generally a considerable number of them in the place.

At ten a party set out on parole in charge of a German sergeant to the football ground to play or look on, coming back at twelve. It was possible to go every second day on this. In the afternoon from 2 to 4 or 4.30 there was a walk in the country, also on parole, and with a German sergeant as before, which one could manage to get a place on several times a week. At 5 there was another appel or roll call in our yard, and at 9.30 we were counted, for the third and last time in the day, in our rooms.

Apart from the three roll calls we were not disturbed by the authorities, and could put in our time according to our own sweet will. Some of the sons of rest took advantage of this to spend most of it in bed, but there were other ways.

One of them was cooking. We divided ourselves into messes, generally from two to six in number, and one's day as cook came round pretty often. The mess I belonged to consisted of Dick Conway (of the pick and shovel charge at Gallipoli), who was with me in Hammerstein; Going, an Irishman too, and an artillery man; Owen, a Naval Flying man; and Eric Wilkinson, a nice looking Manchester boy, and a good friend of mine. They had all been wounded before being taken prisoner.

At the expense of the prisoners a number of gas rings were fixed up on the ground floor, and here there was a great concourse before each meal, and all sorts of fearful and wonderful dishes were concocted, of which even Mrs. Beeton had never dreamt in her most inspired moments. Our washing up was done by British orderlies, of whom there were about one to every seven or eight officers.

The only exercising ground for between two hundred and three hundred officers in the Lager was a small yard, so that the walks and games, of which I have made mention, were absolutely necessary to health. A soccer league with six teams was started and caused a good deal of interest.

Rugby was also played and a couple of really good games were seen, though the ground was as hard as iron and was crossed by a broad cinder track which did a lot of damage. After the Armistice a great match was played between the two Lagers, and ended in a victory for us by twenty-four points to ten. Enthusiasm ran very high and even the German officers in charge of the respective Lagers were cheering on their own sides!

Our indoor entertainments consisted of cinemas, theatres, and concerts, paid for and run by the prisoners, as of course all such things were. The cinemas generally turned up every second week, but the Boche films were inferior in intellectual depth and delicate humour to those which are to be seen at home. Lager one had set up a neat stage in their dining hall, and formed quite a good theatrical company, and we were allowed to go over and see most of their productions, which included a few really first-class plays and variety shows. Their "ladies" were a particularly strong feature. Later on we had a stage rigged up in our own Lager and our local talent provided several excellent entertainments, and showed that we, too, could hold our own in the way of feminine beauty.

In the first blush of our enthusiasm a large number of educational classes and lectures were started, but, alas! owing to the frailty of human nature and the deadening effect of captivity, most of them rapidly passed away. The camp library, which ultimately owned about twelve hundred volumes, was a real godsend. The bulk of it, of course, was novels, but it had a very fair sprinkling of more solid stuff calculated to save one from that softening of the brain known to prisoners as "gefangenitis," which was reported to attack those long in captivity.

On Sundays there was a Protestant service in the church of Lager one to which we were permitted to go in the morning. As we had two chaplains and an organ and choir it had quite a touch of home about it.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ESCAPES.

OWING to the position of our camp at the farthest confines of Bochedom, a successful escape was almost impossible. At first sight it even seemed a hopeless undertaking to get out of the place itself. The windows on the street were barred with iron. The yard was surrounded by a high wall and barbed wire. Sentries with loaded rifles and telephones were skilfully posted on high platforms and other places, so as to command a view of every square yard of the place. Yet people were continuously trickling out, only to be collared again after a few hours' or a few days' liberty.

The best attempt was made by a Flying Corps officer, a friend of mine. He managed to get right across Germany, and was unlucky enough to be captured again on the border at Aachen. An escaped officer whom he had known sent him some books from England. Inside the bindings they contained a map, passport with his photo and German name and profession on it, and a police permit to travel, all complete, and a slip of paper with full directions as to what to do. This parcel he contrived to smuggle out of the parcel room without having it inspected, though the things were so well hidden that an inspection would hardly have discovered them.

Having got these his next difficulty was to get out of the Lager. He procured a civilian cap and a Tommy's overcoat, which did for a civilian one when turned inside out, and managed to go to church on Sunday night in the dark as one of the orderlies. This party was counted in the Lager and then marched under guard to Lager one, and back again after service, when they were once more counted. My friend went with them and on the return journey the orderlies, who were all in the know, occupied the attention of the half dozen guards at a certain point, one offering a biscuit to one of them, another edging one towards the wall, and another stopping to tie his bootlace, and so on. In the middle of this the officer suddenly turned right about face and walked away under the nose of the sentry who was superintending the boot lacing.

When the orderlies reached the Lager another one was waiting to fill the vacant place and the number was found correct. A dummy was rigged up in the absentee's bed that night and the night after, and his absence from roll call was covered the next two days by the simple expedient of an officer who had been counted at one end of the company dodging along behind and getting counted again at the other. The Boche were really very stupid in some points, for a clever people. By this means he was forty-eight hours away before they knew anything about it, and they pleased us all very much by sentencing him to two days' "jug" for not going to the office when called for during this period.

He hid outside Schweidnitz for a week, and then

went into the station and took a ticket to a town some distance off. There he walked out of the station and back again and took a ticket to another, and so worked his way across Germany till he reached Aachen, where unhappily his luck gave out, and he was taken, owing to making a mistake about the exact position of the frontier. The Germans were very much worried to know how he had got away, and when he came back after a fortnight they were always trying to pump him on the subject without success. For this exploit he got two or three weeks' jug.

Another Flying man was the hero of a more impudent performance. He rigged himself out one day in a workman's overall and cap, dirtied his face, and took a bag of tools down to a corner of the Lager where a ladder led up to one of the sentry's platforms. Here he carefully examined and measured the wall, went up a few steps of the ladder and measured again, and finally got on to the platform with the sentry, who asked him what he was doing.

He spoke German very well and informed him that he was measuring the wall for some pipes that were to be put up. The sentry asked where his pass to come into the Lager was, and after searching his pockets he confessed he must have left it at home, whereupon the sentry sent him off to get it and refused to let him back into the Lager till he produced it! He went off accordingly and made for the station. Unfortunately from the point of view of escaping, he was a Jew with one of the largest noses I have seen, and this was recognised by some civilian

who had worked in the Lager, and he was taken and brought back again.

A less brainy and more laborious method of exit was by tunnel. Several of these were discovered by the Boche; there were two quite respectable ones at the time we left which were never found out, one under the kitchen boiler and another under one of the floors. They were never completed owing to the Armistice.

The punishments for escaping are regulated, I suppose, by international agreement, and the tariff includes various terms from a week in prison upwards, according to whether it is a first, second, or —nth attempt, and to whether forged documents are found on the escapee, etc.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE TREATMENT OF PRISONERS.

THE first question asked by everyone, as soon as they have congratulated the repatriated prisoner, are, "How did they treat you? Are they as bad as they are painted?" and it is somewhat difficult to answer offhand.

We were fortunate in our Lager in the fact that three German officers who commanded it successively were gentlemen, and really tried to make things run smoothly. There were other camps in Germany where a bad tempered commandant made things very unpleasant indeed.

The accommodation in the distributing camp in Rastatt was abominable, and in Schweidnitz it was not good. The place was over-crowded, somewhat insanitary, without sufficient exercising ground, and, I should say, in every way inferior to the hotels provided for German officers in England.

The fact seems to be that in Germany, as elsewhere, there are good and bad. The bad are capable of anything—the good are not so bad, and one's treatment depended on which class one knocked up against.

For instance, a friend of mine was picked up with a fractured skull and damaged shoulder, on March 21st, and woke a couple of days after in a Boche hospital, his life having been saved by an operation on his head, while he was still unconscious. On the other hand, he was operated on later by a German doctor without an anæsthetic until he fainted from the pain—a circumstance about which he was very annoyed.

The general treatment of prisoners had improved in 1918. The tendency of the war from summer on was to make the Boche more polite. Prisoners taken earlier in the war had often a poor time of it. Some mercantile marine men, who were captured by the "Moewe," told me how they were locked down in the bottom of the vessel for six weeks while fights with various ships went on overhead, and on one occasion the water began to rise over the iron floor on which they had to live and sleep. In Germany they were sent to Russian strafe camps and such places, where prison cells, in which men could neither stand, sit nor lie, were provided, and various cruelties were practised.

The Germans could not understand these sailormen, because no matter how starved, frozen or ill-treated they were, if two of them had a quarrel they got out in the middle of the Lager and settled it with their fists.

On one occasion a German sentry with rifle and bayonet went into one of their tents to turn the prisoners out, and made himself so disagreeable that they took his weapon from him, stuck the bayonet

in him, and left him outside for his friends to collect. Next day the whole Lager was marched to a hill some distance from the camp, their overcoats were taken from them, and they were told they would have to remain standing in the snow there till they gave up the man who had done it. They stood there all day and all night, until eventually the man gave himself up to save his comrades further suffering. I am sorry I cannot remember what happened to him, but as the sentry was not killed, I believe he escaped shooting.

Personally I never experienced any active cruelty, and I do not think that it was at all general, at least where officers were concerned. With privates things were by no means so good. They were forced to work behind the lines and in mines, under bad conditions, and on entirely insufficient food. I shall not soon forget the appearance of a batch of British Tommies who came to us to act as orderlies. They had been taken in March, and three months' work behind the line had reduced them to living skeletons. They were so weak that most of them could scarcely walk, and they looked at death's door. They were a striking contrast to the fat and contented Fritzes whom I had seen at work so often in France. It took some months of decent food to get them back to the normal again.

Most of them had had varied adventures. One of them was one of the three or four survivors of a post held by fifty odd men of the South Irish Horse, and commanded by Richard Conway, a Tipperary man whom I am proud to call my friend. They held their

ground on March 21st for hours after they were surrounded on all sides, retook their trench several times after being driven out, and inflicted tremendous losses on the Germans before the last man fell.

Hats off to the British Infantry Tommy!—the man who bore the real brunt of the war, the hardest worked, worst housed, and worst paid man in the army, who for a shilling a day fought like a lion, worked like a nigger, carried himself everywhere like a cheerful gentleman, and laid down his life without complaint on every front for the freedom of the world.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE CONDITION OF THINGS IN GERMANY.

AS to the condition of things in Germany, there is no doubt that they were very bad long before the Armistice. They seem to me to have rationed things so successfully that they were able to go on to the brink of starvation, with the result that the collapse, when it came, was all the more complete. The people of Schweidnitz showed the traces of privation very plainly. A fat one was hardly ever seen, and the children all looked pinched, thin, and weakly.

Substitutes for everything were on sale; wooden shoes, paper chairs, paper string, paper clothes, and even paper towels, bark of trees for tobacco, brick dust for soap, and so forth. But substitutes for decent food are not possible to manufacture. Under the circumstances it must be accounted for righteousness to the Boche that most of our food parcels came through safely.

Everything in the country, too, had a used up appearance. The army and its equipment, the railway trains, the agriculture, conducted with cows for the most part as substitutes for horses, all went to show that the Empire was on its last legs.

Socialism was rife among the soldiers. All the sergeant-majors in our camp except one were of that faith. Almost any soldier one spoke to was the same. One of our guards on a train journey was asked did not the Kaiser go to the front. "Yes," he said, "he gets up in a balloon miles behind the front and shouts, "Go on my brave soldiers, while we go plugging through the mud and get killed!" The devotion to the Hohenzollerns, which was supposed to be so universal in Germany, was conspicuous by its absence.

The ease with which the Revolution was carried out in November, and the military caste overthrown almost without a blow, showed how prevalent this socialism must have been.

On November 9th the Revolution reached Schweidnitz, and the Soldiers' and Workmen's Council took over command. On the 10th we saw our guard taking the Hohenzollern eagle out of their helmets and tearing off their shoulder straps. We immediately ran downstairs with pieces of soap and tins of food to buy them as souvenirs, and the most fraternal feelings prevailed for the moment.

The sergeant-major in charge of our tin room became commandant of the town and both Lagers. The officers lay low for some days and then came back, having bowed to the inevitable and accepted the new order of things, and were reinstated in their jobs under the control of the Soldiers' and Workmen's Council. A deputation of the latter waited on the Senior British Officer, informed him that they had taken control of things, that it would be neces-

sary to keep us shut up for some days, in case any counter revolution took place, but that they would endeavour later to give us as much liberty as possible.

There was a considerable air of uncertainty about things during these days. No one seemed to know whether a counter revolution might not be started and fighting begin, or whether the new regime would manage to get our parcels of food and letters through as well as the old, or whether, if they came to blows, they might not shoot their prisoners as a security against their taking sides. None of these troubles materialised, and even the news in the Boche papers that the British Fleet was fraternising with the Germans in Keel, and King George had abdicated, which worried some officers quite a good deal, proved to be unfounded.

During our last three weeks we had the freedom of the city conferred on us, and could go in and out without guards at our own sweet will between certain hours, and spend our money as much as we liked in the shops, where we were welcome enough, as Fritz has a keen eye to business. I hear that Lille, when the Allies entered, was decorated with French and British flags sold shortly before to the enthusiastic inhabitants by astute German commercial travellers.

During these days we had an excellent opportunity to observe the nakedness of the land. When I tell you that a lunch consisting of a piece of roast goose, one potato, and a spoonful of vegetables, cost ten marks, then half a sovereign, you will understand that Silesia, at any rate, is not a land of plenty.

A number of troops from the front came in to be demobilised in the end of November. Their reception was very tame indeed, and we thought that our own send-off on leaving was a much more imposing function.

After a month, which seemed longer than all our previous captivity, we left Schweidnitz by train on December 19th, and in the small hours of the 21st embarked at Danzig on the good ship "Russ," which steamed into the Baltic to the strains of "God Save the King," and bore us safely over the North Sea to the shores of Leith, where we disembarked on Christmas Day. As we stepped ashore a native called out, "Is anyone short of matches?" One of us said "Yes," whereupon the gentleman produced a box from which he picked out two and handed them over. Then we knew there could be no mistake and we had really landed in Scotland.

FINIS.

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